

Your Sacred Calling

Various Texts: 1 Peter 2, Gen 1:26-28, Gen 3:15-17

Halifax: 3 January 2010

Introduction:

Here we are at the beginning of another New Year.

- As you know, from time to time, I break from our regular sermon series to preach an occasional message related to the season.
 - And this is one of those times when I want to do that.
- Recently, some of you have told me that you have a growing appreciation for the fact that your daily work is to be offered to God.
 - You are starting to understand your everyday labour as a calling from Him that is to be done for Him.
 - I want to encourage you along in that kind of thinking!
 - So what better time to do that than as you get ready to go back to work in the New Year.
 - My desire is that you would all go into this year with a fresh perspective that your work is to be presented to the Lord as a daily offering.
- This is something that the church lost sight of over the years before the reformation...
 - There began to arise in the church from early on a dualistic mindset about life...
 - There was a division between the sacred and the secular that had more to do with Greek philosophy than Biblical exegesis.
 - From the distorted perspective,
 - a person who *really* wanted to serve God had abandon the common life.
 - He could not be a tradesman or a salesman,
 - He could not even care for his own family...
 - but had to leave all of these things for Christ.
 - It was a twisted understanding of Christ's call that we are to leave all to follow Him.
 - But in the protestant reformation, there was a return to the scriptures.
 - This had a sweeping effect on worship, but it also had a huge effect on how people looked at their daily lives.
 - People began to understand again that all lawful callings were to be done as service to God—
 - that even a slave with an ungodly master could offer His work to God.
 - And marriage and vocation became sacred again—something you could do for God.

- Martin Luther had this to say:
 - LUTHER: Just as those who are now called “spiritual,” that is, priests, bishops, or popes, are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the word of God and the sacraments, which is their work and office, so it is with the temporal authorities. They bear the sword and rod in their hand to punish the wicked and protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has his own work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops.
- This is what we should understand by the phrase, “the priesthood of all believers.”
 - It is not the idea that everyone, with or without ordination, can preach and administer the sacraments and church discipline...
 - That was never the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer in the reformation...
 - It rather was that we all have sacrifices to offer to God,
 - and that our sacrifice includes not only our offering or prayer and praise, but also the offering to God of our daily labour.
- You are thinking in the right way when you look at your daily work as God’s calling.
 - It is not just ministers or missionaries that are called into full time service to God.
 - Everyone of us is called to be God’s full time priests, offering ourselves to Him as living sacrifices, dedicated wholly to His service—
 - Whether you are a farmer or a doctor, a salesman or a carpenter, a mother called to care for her children, or a student who is in school..
 - Your vocation is what God has given you to do, and you are to do it for Him.
- Sadly, it seems that in the modern day church, this biblical view of work is being lost again.

So today I want to show you...

- First, that your daily work is God’s calling...
- Second, that Jesus Christ redeems your labour...
- Third, how understanding this about your work will transform your work.

So let’s begin with the first point:

I. You daily work is God’s calling for you...

- A. We learn in Genesis 1:26-28 that God called us to labour even before the fall.
1. Sometimes, people wrongly suppose that labour was a curse that came after the fall.
 - They suppose that before the fall, we would not have had to work...
 - I guess we would just lay around in a hammock all day and eat grapes and bananas that grew beside our hammock and maybe go to Disney World or something.
 - But this is not at all the way it was!
 - Labour is something that God gave us to do in paradise!
 - Labour is a blessing, not a curse.
 - Perhaps folks are confused about this sometimes because on account of the fall, God did curse our labour...
 - He made it toilsome and difficult where before it was pleasant and easy...
 - Perhaps people suppose that labour was the curse rather than understanding that labour was cursed.
 - It is like marriage—
 - It is still a good thing that God gave us as a blessing, only now it has been cursed so that there are difficulties associated with it.
 2. God's original ordinance of labour is spelled out for us in Gen. 1:26-28.
 - I invite you to turn there and look at this passage with me.
 - Gen. 1:26-28: "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.""
 - a. You see that there are two things that God is calling us to do here...
 - First, to multiply and fill the earth...
 - This involves having babies and all that is involved with that!
 - He is not only *commanding* us to do this (with these words), but also *empowering* us to do it.
 - When He speaks the words, "Be fruitful and multiply,"
 - He is actually giving us the ability to be fruitful and multiply.

- It is a blessing as well as a command...
 - As when someone says, “Make yourself at home...take whatever you want from the refrigerator.”
 - He is not just giving you an order, but empowering you to take whatever you can find in the frig.
- Second, the LORD told us to subdue the earth.
 - *Subdue* means to harness and utilise the earth’s vast resources for God’s glory and our good!
 - God is telling us that the earth is to be employed for our pleasure and benefit to His glory!
 - We are to use it to bring blessing to each other.
- b. This idea of filling and subduing the earth is very comprehensive.
 - At the most basic level are our physical needs—
 - We are to subdue the earth for food.
 - As the population grows, we need related services like transportation and horticulture.
 - We are to plant crops for ourselves and for others!
 - But there is more to subduing the earth...
 - The LORD made us with a desire for beauty and art.
 - So you have callings in music, literature, painting, architecture, cooking, cosmetology, and many other things...
 - And add desire for discovery and you have research and exploration of God’s creation.
 - The rich variety of man’s work is brought out in the things that Adam is specifically called to do (under the umbrella of his general calling to subdue the earth).
 - He is given work to do with his hands in providing for his needs—namely, tilling the ground so that it might bring forth food.
 - Gen. 2:15: “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”
 - He is given work to do in classifying the animals, answering to his desire for discovery and observation.
 - Gen. 2:19: “Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name.”
 - This was particularly a work for him to do with his mind.

- And so it is that God has given us work for both our bodies and our minds.
 - Both kinds of work were given before the Fall.
- c. Our imaginations are not strong enough to envision what kind of beauty and developments man would have made if he had not fallen!
 - I'll have more to say about the fall's effects in a minute,
 - But just try to think what it would have been like to be unimpaired in our work by storms, errors, sin, sickness, death and all the rest.
 - And even harder to imagine, just think what it would have been like to have people who were not sinners and not subject to the fall...
 - all eagerly at work to bless each other to the glory of God!
- 3. This work that God gave us to do was patterned after His own work of creation.
 - Like God, our work would have been fruitful and would have produced what is good.
 - In His blessing, God promised that it would be so, that we would have success in bringing forth what was good.
 - In fact, man's labour is actually co-ordinate with God's works.
 - For example, consider how God provides food for us, even today:
 - He provides a rich variety of foods for us by using *our* labour to plant, harvest, distribute, and prepare it.
 - In this, we give thanks to God for providing our food, and we recognise that He brings it to us through human instruments.
 - What this means is that farmers, manufacturers of farm equipment, food processors, truck drivers, grocers, and chefs are all involved in doing God's work—
 - even if they refuse to acknowledge Him...
 - they are all instruments of His mercy to bring food to the world for both nourishment and enjoyment.
 - By extension, we can say this about every legitimate calling in the world—
 - that in a certain respect, those who fulfil these tasks are God's ministers or instruments who carry out His work in the world.
 - You can see in this how your calling is sacred!
 - You are doing God's work as His servant!
 - You can see how man perverts his sacred calling when he does not acknowledge God in it and fulfil it for God's glory as His servant.

- You can see how inexcusable it is for man to deny God even as he is engaged in doing God's work and participating in God's blessing.
- But Christian, you ought not to be involved in that denial!

TRANS> Nevertheless, we are all greatly affected by the fall with regard to our calling.

B. Now I want to show you the effect that the fall had on man's labour.

1. The fall made our labour burdensome.

- Turn over to Genesis 3:17-19 and you can see this:
 - Gen. 3:17-19: Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return.
- a. The difficulties can be broken down as follows:
 - 1) First, there are hindrances by nature itself, here referred to as thorns and thistles.
 - The curse is the reason that things we don't plant seem to thrive so well in our gardens and things we do plant often have trouble.
 - Thorns and thistles, of course, are not exhaustive,
 - but stand for all the difficulties that nature brings—everything from termites to frozen pipes to tornadoes.
 - 2) Second, there is the hindrance of death, referred to here as "returning to the dust."
 - Here is a reversal of dominion:
 - We were called to subdue the ground and have dominion over it, but now it eventually subdues us.
 - We return to dust.
 - By extension, this also includes sickness or injury that leads to death.
 - Problems in everything from our brains to our backs cause great hindrance to our labour so that we bring forth far less fruit than we otherwise would.
 - 3) Third, there is the hindrance of sin...
 - In Gen 3:16, God told Eve that she would be striving with her husband for his place or position...

- This strife between those who lead and those who are led extends into all our relationships...
- Store owners and managers have to contend with theft and laziness as well as inefficiency, incompetence, and carelessness.
- Workers have to contend with shoddy selfish management and with dangerous or uncomfortable working conditions.

TRANS> All of this makes our labour to be toilsome much of the time, fruitless at the worst of times, and not very productive even at the best of times.

- b. The introduction of the curse presupposes that before the fall, there were no such difficulties.
 - You need to see in this that work itself is not bad—
 - Work itself is not a curse, but a blessing.
 - Our goal is to see work restored by the redeeming grace of Christ.
 - There is good reason to believe that labour and work will continue in heaven—
 - what won't continue is the curse upon labour that gives us so much trouble in conjunction with our work.
 - You need to teach your children (and learn for yourself) that work is not something to hate and avoid,
 - but something to pour yourself into with gratitude—
 - What a blessing that you can do good for others!

TRANS> And there is still another affect of the fall as well...

2. The fall made it necessary to have a lot of vocations that would not otherwise have been necessary.
 - a. It's hard for us to imagine what things were like before the fall,
 - 1) but is it not reasonable to suppose that we would not need repairmen?
 - 2) And how different government would be—
 - There would be no need for law enforcement or judges, nor would there be any need for military personnel and equipment.
 - Even lawyers would not be needed, at least not for most of what they do.
 - 3) And then there is the entire health care industry—
 - There would be no need for nurses or doctors or pharmacists.
 - Nor would there be a need for relief work in places where there are famines or epidemics.

- b. Just think how much of our efforts and resources are poured into all of these post-fall occupations now.
 - This is not to say that these callings are inferior—
 - they are quite proper and honouring to God now that we are fallen...
 - They are, in fact, a part of His redemptive grace that restores what is ruined by the fall.
 - But where might we be if these vocations were not necessary!
 - Apart from the fall, we would likely have travelled to the far reaches of the universe by this time...
 - And just think what we might have done in music and art!
 - How great our delight would be in God and in one another!

TRANS> Although the Fall had its effects...

- 3. You ought not think that the Fall revoked man's call to labour—to fill and subdue the earth.
 - a. Even though Gen. 3:16-19 is primarily pronouncing a curse,
 - If you look at it carefully, you can see that also speaks of a blessing upon labour and childbearing that remains...
 - Even though the ground is cursed in verse 17,
 - it also says, "In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life."
 - Do you see the blessing in that?
 - The blessing is that the ground will still produce for Adam—
 - There will be difficulty and hardship—but he will still eat out it.
 - The ground *will* still produce.
 - b. Likewise, in verse 16, Eve is told: "In pain you shall bring forth children."
 - The curse is obvious, but do you see the blessing here?
 - It won't be easy now,
 - but God will still give her children.
 - She will still be able to multiply!
 - c. So God's ordinance of labour continues even after the fall, and though mitigated, the fruitfulness of labour also continues.
 - God has so situated and constituted man that he does not really have the choice to renounce the ordinance of labour...
 - In his fallen estate, he continues to work...
 - He has a desire to work, though sometimes distorted...
 - And he has a need to work so that he can provide for himself.
 - Even his desire for beauty and pleasure gets him up to work.

- To this may be added the observation that as far as performance of work is concerned,
 - There is very little difference between believers and unbelievers.
 - You all know that a Christian businessman is not always more competent than a non-Christian,
 - You know that Christian mechanics are not always as skilled as non-Christian mechanics.
 - You know that Christian musicians are not always as talented as non-Christians.
 - In fact, the opposite often seems to be the case.
 - As the apostle says, in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29:
 - 1 Cor 1:26-29: “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble... But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

TRANS> So you see how God’s creation ordinance of labour continues after the Fall, even for those who are not redeemed through Jesus Christ.

- This naturally leads to the question:
 - What difference does Christ make when it comes to your vocation or your calling in this world?
 - If Christians are not necessarily the best at everything, what is the change that comes through salvation?
 - This brings us to our second point...

II. How does Christ redeem our labour?

- Let me show you first of all that...
 - A. Jesus has made us kings and priests to God.
 - 1. Consider the following:
 - a. Revelation 1:5-6 says:
 - Rev 1:5-6: “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

- b. Revelation 5:9-10 says:
 - Rev 5:9-10: "And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.""
- c. Note that in both passages it says that we are made priests *to God*.
 - That is very significant—
 - Christ consecrates us as priests to *God*, not to *idols*.
 - He does this by the shedding of His own blood as both passages also say.
 - Before a priest could serve, he himself had to be sanctified by the shedding of blood so that his offerings might be acceptable to God.

TRANS> So we are all priests and kings by the shedding of Christ's blood!

- 2. But what does a priest do?
 - He offers sacrifices to God.
 - a. Take a look at 1 Peter 2:
 - 1 Peter 2:4-5: "Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
 - b. Isn't that amazing?
 - Through Jesus Christ, you are made priests who are able to offer up sacrifices to God that are actually acceptable to Him!
 - It's amazing because we are sinners, and all our works come short of the glory of God...
 - Yet, here it is, Jesus makes the believer's works acceptable!
 - c. And what are these works?
 - 1) You see that they are called *spiritual sacrifices*.
 - That is to distinguish them from what the New Testament calls the carnal sacrifices of the Old Testament...
 - Things like incense and animals that were offered to God by the priests in the Old Testament economy to foreshadow Christ.
 - 2) What are these *spiritual sacrifices* that believers are said to offer to God in an acceptable way?

- a) There is little doubt that these spiritual sacrifices involve the sacrifice of praise to God...
 - What we do when we gather together for worship in the assembly...
- b) But the context shows us that these spiritual sacrifices also involve our daily offering of service to God...
 - It is our daily offering up of ourselves in service to God.
 - We proclaim His praises by living as His holy nation in our every day calling as salesmen, truck drivers, homemakers, students, doctors, builders, teachers and rocket scientists.
 - Look at how Peter goes on in verse 9 and following to urge us to do good work as God's people—everyday:
 - 1 Peter 2:9-12: But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.
 - After this, Peter goes on to call us to:
 - good works as citizens (2:13-17),
 - good works as servants even if we have abusive masters (2:18-25),
 - good works as wives even if we have abusive husbands (3:1-7),
 - and good works in all of life (3:9-19)
 - He shows us how the abuses we suffer in our daily work actually give us opportunities to show how different we are as God's people!
 - We show people that we are there to do them good even as Christ has done good for us... no matter how they treat us!
 - We are so in love with Christ and with doing good, that we are going to keep doing it no matter what.
 - See how he concludes in I Peter 4:19!
 - 1 Peter 4:19: "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."

3) Paul also describes these *spiritual sacrifices* in Romans 12:1-2.

- He says:
 - Rom 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- You see in this statement of Paul's the same idea...
 - That because of the mercies of God (salvation in Jesus) we are able to present our bodies as living sacrifices that are holy and acceptable to God.

3. It is in this phrase "acceptable to God" that all the difference is to be found between the believer's works and the unbeliever's works.

- a. The unbeliever's everyday work is not acceptable to God.
 - The believer's everyday work is acceptable to God.
- b. That's why back in I Peter 2:6, it says that the one who believes in Jesus will not be put to shame.
 - I Peter 2:6: "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.""
 - On the day of judgement, the wickedness of the everyday work of the unbeliever will be fully exposed for what it is to his shame.
 - He will see, and everyone else will see, how unacceptable it is to do accounting, garbage collecting, teaching, parenting, research, carpentry, relief work, or anything else that is not offered up to God as an acceptable sacrifice.

B. But what is it that makes the believer's daily service in this world acceptable and the unbeliever's unacceptable?

1. Well, to put it in one word, the answer is Christ!
 - *Christ* is what makes the believer's daily service acceptable to God.
 - He is the one who makes us priests unto God.
2. There are two things He does to make our work acceptable to God:
 - First let me state the two things, then I will explain them.
 - He changes the way we look at our work.
 - He changes the way God looks at our work.
 - Both are necessary.

- a. So first, “He changes the way we look at our work.”
- 1) Jesus causes us to look at our work as service to God.
 - He causes us to see our work as something we do to please God.
 - Before Jesus changes us by His Spirit, our focus is elsewhere.
 - Most of the time, we do our work merely to please men... ourselves, our loved ones, or the one who hired us—
 - and when it is to please the one who hired us, it is often in order to get pay cheques and promotions.
 - We do what we have to do to get by or to get ahead.
 - Sometimes, our motives are much higher than that—we may actually work in order to benefit others.
 - but outside of Christ, our attitude is still not right because we do not aim at pleasing God.
 - 2) In Colossians 3:22-24, Paul speaks of the contrast between serving God and serving man in our work.
 - Notice how he says over and over again that we are to aim to please God.
 - Col. 3:22-24: “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”
 - The unacceptability of work that is done merely to please men is highlighted in verse 25.
 - Col. 3:25: “But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”
 - We are not sensitive to how reprehensible and wicked works are that are not done to please God, no matter how beneficial that work may be to man—like the person who gives his life to save his friend.
 - Such works are wicked because they are idolatrous!
 - They are great sacrifices offered to something other than God!
 - That’s why they must meet with the judgement of a holy God.
 - Do you see?
 - You are all priests!
 - As such, you either offer your work to God or to someone else.
 - Even the ploughing of the wicked is an abomination to God.

- 3) For a work to be a good work that is acceptable to God it must be done with a view to pleasing Him.
 - That means that it will be done in conformity with His commandments and with a motive to glorify Him.
 - Jesus, by the working of His Spirit in us, enables us to do such works.

TRANS> If you have an honest conscience, you would have to admit that even with the help of the Spirit, you know that even your best works are filled with much weakness and impurity.

- And right you are!
 - That's why you need the other thing that Jesus does to make your work acceptable to God.
 - Not only does He change the way you look at your work...

3. He also changes the way God looks at your work.
 - a. If the Holy God who created us were to take your very best work that you have ever done and judge it according to His perfect standard of holiness, there would be enough imperfection in that work to send you to Hell forever.
 - That's a hard concept for us to grasp today,
 - but it won't be hard for us at all once we have seen the full glory of God on the last day!
 - Then we will marvel at His patience and longsuffering and wonder why we did not meet with such judgement long ago.

TRANS> But here is the God news...

- b. Jesus died to atone for sin.
 - When a sinner is joined to Jesus by faith, all his sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus.
 - His sins are forgiven so that the Father no longer holds them against him.
 - The Father punished those sins when Jesus suffered on the cross, and so we are looked upon as righteous in God's sight.
 - That means that the imperfection and weakness in those works that we offer to God as His priests are not imputed to us...
 - Both our persons and our works are cleansed by the blood of Jesus.
 - All the imperfections are washed away and only what is good is left.
- c. There are two things to understand about this...

- First of all, understand that you will have no good works from before your conversion,
 - because such works were not offered to God with an aim to please Him—not at all—
 - so even though they will not be held against us, neither will they be subject to reward because there is nothing good in them before God.
- Secondly, understand that there will be many works done after conversion that were not done with a sincere aim to please God,
 - and these will not be rewarded either because no good will be found in them.
 - They will be forgiven, but they will not be rewarded.
 - It is only those works that are done with an aim to please God and in obedience to His commandments that will be rewarded,
 - and that only because they have been washed in the blood of Christ.

TRANS> So where does this leave you?

- If you are not a believer, it leaves you without any hope whatsoever.
 - Even your works that are highly regarded by men will be condemned as wicked and idolatrous on the day of judgement, and you will be brought to shame.
 - They were not offered to God, they were not cleansed by Christ.
- But if you are a believer it leaves you with a wonderful opportunity!
 - An opportunity to “offer up acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:5).”
 - An opportunity to get up every day and realise that you are priest who is called to dedicate your work to God and to give yourself to God as a spiritual sacrifice in service to Him.
 - With such a perspective, there is no longer any such thing as mundane work!
 - As one man put it,
 - “Believers are endowed with the incredible privilege of ministering for God daily wherever He has called them. But because some believers lose sight of their priestly calling, they slosh through their tasks day after day, week after week, losing valuable opportunities to serve God and glorify Him as priests in their vocations.”
 - What a difference it makes to know that you are God’s priest and that whether you are at the office or the kitchen sink,
 - Christ enables you to do God’s work for God’s glory.

III. If you would but maintain this perspective, how it would revolutionise your work!

- Let's look at four ways it revolutionises your work to have this perspective...
- A. First, it would make you more diligent in your work!
 1. Just think how much meaning this perspective gives to all those Proverbs that encourage you to be diligent, like Prov. 13:4:
 - Prov 13:4: The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.
 - There is far more at stake here than the mere loss of worldly riches!
 - The lazy man actually gives up the opportunity to serve His God and obtain *His* reward!
 2. You only have so much time on earth, and you do well make the best of it.
 - Ecclesiastes 9:10 encourages you therefore:
 - Ecc 9:10: Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.
 - And of course we have already looked at Colossians 3:23-24
 - Col 3:23-24: And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.
 3. When your daily work is viewed as your service to God,
 - you can see why there are such strong statements about idleness, showing that it is incompatible with the true faith.
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11-12: "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us... (11) For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.
 - I Timothy 5:8 "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."
 - Your work is the means God has appointed for your family's provision,
 - and when you don't provide for them (when it is in your power to do so), God Himself takes issue with you.

- You are acting the part of a servant for whom the king has provided resources (time and ability) to provide for his subjects who squanders His resources and makes the subjects think the king has no interest in them.

TRANS> If you have the perspective that your work is God's work, you will surely be diligent in your work...

- but not only that....

B. You will also be patient in your work when difficulties come.

1. You will view suffering in your work as an opportunity to enter into Jesus' sufferings—
 - You will see it as an opportunity to show your love to God by continuing to serve in spite of all kinds of opposition.
 - to show others that you are going to love them and do good for them no matter what because Jesus has done good for you.
2. You will have a heart to continue serving those who are ungrateful or unkind or even abusive because you will be doing it for a much higher motive: to please God!
 - I Peter 4:12-14: Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.
 - With this perspective, you will even be able to rejoice in service that is difficult.

TRANS> Realising that you serve Christ will not only make you diligent and patient...

C. It will also cause you to give proper attention to all aspects of your calling—to be balanced.

1. One of the characteristics of those who do not serve Christ is a terrible disproportion in their service.
 - a. For example, a man will give himself to his business and fail to give attention to his wife and children.
 - He will live as if their physical needs are all their matters and their spiritual needs are irrelevant.
 - He will break the Sabbath in order to gain wealth because he is not looking at his work as work he does for God.

- b. Or, on the other hand, a man will become so home-centred that he will fail to provide for his family's material needs and will fail to fulfil his calling to subdue the earth.
 - c. And of course there are even worse versions of this
 - as when a man abandons his wife children altogether in order to pursue his own pleasures...
 - His hobbies, some woman that catches his eye, or as I heard about recently, to pursue a life of homosexuality.
 - This is the self-life.
 - Instead of looking to serve the LORD, he just follows his own desires.
2. When you know that everything you do is for God,
- Then you begin to consult his will as far as what you do with your time.
 - And as you do, you give the right proportion of time to your activities.
 - You do not neglect one thing in order to do another—because it is His calling you delight to fulfill.

TRANS> So then, we have seen that when you realise that your daily work is for God, it will make you diligent and patient and balanced in your work...

- and now, lastly,

D. A sense that you serve Christ in your work will cause you to be a greater blessing to others.

1. One who wants to please Christ will truly be a blessing to those he serves...
 - How blessed is the husband whose wife is motivated in her work to please Christ!
 - He will have a wife in whom he can trust and who will do him good and not evil all the days of her life!
 - She will do her work with joy rather than with strife...
 - Nothing worse than a feast with strife!
 - How blessed are the parents whose children are motivated to do their work to please Christ!
 - They will be always ready to repent when they have sinned,
 - they will not have to be forced to do their work, but will do it cheerfully and gladly.
 - How blessed is the business that has workers who are motivated to do their work to please Christ!
 - They will be honest and diligent, free from complaining and pettiness.

TRANS> Thus you see how you will be a blessing to those who are over you in authority...

- But it will also work the other way...

- 2. If you are the one who is in authority, you will be a blessing to those under you...
 - How blessed is the business that has an owner or manager that wants to please Christ!
 - He will see to it that those who work for him are treated with fairness and equity, and that their wages are fair.
 - He will correct them with gentleness and be ready to counsel them in whatever ways they have need.

 - How blessed are the children whose parents or the wife whose husband wants to please Christ.
 - She will not be tempted to nag him to fulfil his calling, to do his duties in instructing the family, in providing for them, and in ministering to their needs.
 - He will do all this cheerfully!

 - He will be willing to own his errors when he has sinned, and will deal patiently and gently, yet firmly and justly with his children.

TRANS> All this will be so because the one who serves in leadership or under leadership will recognise that he is serving Christ, and that he has been called to do God's work.

Conclusion

Christian, what a precious blessing Christ has bestowed on you!

- To think that you can wash dishes as an acceptable and pleasing act to the God of heaven,
 - and that for such work you will not lose your reward—
 - yes, even a cup of cold water given in His name will not be forgotten by Him!
 - With that in mind, I think its time for us to start giving out a lot of water, don't you?

- Be diligent to fulfil your calling in 2010 because remember,
 - Christ has made you a priest unto God.
 - You have the privilege of getting up every day and giving yourself to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
 - Thanks be to God.