



Title: Created for Work

Text: Genesis 2:15-17; Ecclesiastes 1:1-11, 2:22-23; Colossians 3:23-24

Connection to Unit Theme: God created us to work, and to do so with joy. Because of our sin, work is often meaningless and toilsome. With jaded hearts we view work as either our giver of meaning and our identity, or as a necessary evil. The work of Christ redeems our earthly work. Because Jesus overturned the curse God placed on our work due to our sin, our occupations once again can serve their proper place.

Introduction Idea

In the movie *Groundhog Day*, the main character, Phil (played by actor Bill Murray), finds himself reliving the same day over and over again. At first he finds humor in it, but eventually he becomes depressed. Everything becomes meaningless to him. Sulking one day at a bar, he asks, "What would you do if you were stuck in one place, and every day was exactly the same, and nothing that you did mattered?" Another man at the bar responds, "That about sums it up for me."

I wonder how often Ralph's answer would be our own. We go to work every day, doing the same things with the same people, seeing the same results. Deep down we know that there has to be more to life than this. And so we ache.

Originally our work had meaning and fulfillment. As Adam and Eve tended the garden they found sweet satisfaction in serving God and each other serving God. After the fall that satisfaction gave way to exhausting toil. Thankfully, futility is not the end of the story. Through the work of Jesus our work is renewed, once again having meaning.

Sermon Division I – We've made work meaningless (Gen. 2:15-17; Eccl. 1:1-11, 2:17-23)

We like to think that if our faces wound up on the cover of a tabloid, things would be different for us than the average celebrity. We think to ourselves, "If I had more money, more power, more sex, more knowledge, more fun, a more successful career, better opportunities, I would be happy and fulfilled." Israel's King Solomon had everything that he could ever want. His response to this is shocking. "So I hated life . . ."

Everything was meaningless to the man who had everything, even his work. He gave himself fully to his role as king, but finally "gave up [his] heart to despair over all the toil of [his] labors under the sun." Solomon's words echo a Genesis 3 world of "thorns and thistles," and not the Genesis 2 world of "working" and "keeping" the garden. As Robert Bergen has written, "Without the taint of sin, 'work' was an undiluted blessing."¹

¹ Robert D. Bergen, [HCSB Study Bible](#), 11 n.2:15



"Undiluted blessing" is hardly what many of would say as we roll out of bed on a Monday morning, unless our words drip with sarcasm. Our sin has separated us from the satisfaction work was supposed to bring us, partly because we now expect it to provide ultimate fulfillment. But work was never meant to be our god. Therefore, our idolatry leaves us empty, unsatisfied in our longings for something work cannot deliver. Because work makes a poor god we resign ourselves to despair.

Application: God created you and me to work. This is not a necessary evil, but a blessing. The only way our attitudes toward work will change is for us to find ultimate meaning and satisfaction in God.

Sermon Division II – Jesus restores work's meaning (Col. 3:23-24)

In his book, *The Explicit Gospel*, Matt Chandler shows how the work of Christ redirects our hearts and redeems our work:

Whether you believe in God or not, you are living, walking, and wearing his stuff. He gives gifts to all: food, drink, work, friends, and family. He gives gifts to all, but only the children of God, only those who believe in Jesus, receive the gift of lasting enjoyment. Why? Because if we're oriented around Jesus, our satisfaction is not tied to anything but him. We can actually enjoy God's good gifts the way they're designed to be enjoyed, because they are in orbit around the right sun—not our self, but our Savior.²

When Christ is our greatest desire our work is redeemed because we no longer use work as a God-replacement. This is why Paul can tell the Colossians to "work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." With their hearts fixed on Jesus their work begins to have a new purpose. They are not simply serving a boss, getting a paycheck, or trying to find fulfillment. They are serving the Lord Jesus. When Christ is our greatest passion this infuses everything - even mundane work - with great meaning and purpose.

Application: Are you working as unto the Lord? Begrudging your work is a sign of rebellion, not redemption. It is a sign that we have not rightly taken into account the words of Abraham Kuyper, who once remarked that there was not one square inch of creation about which the Lord could not cry out, "Mine." That includes our work. Such a truth ought to give us joy and meaning.

The first step to redeeming our work is to come to know Christ. Then, we come to see that our workplace is now our mission field where we can reflect and enjoy the glory of God.

² Matt Chandler, [*The Explicit Gospel*](#), 133



Conclusion Idea

Groundhog Day ends on a positive note. Phil falls in love with a woman, and through her suggestion he uses his terrible situation – being stuck in the same day - to improve the lives of everyone around him. Though trapped in his circumstances, Phil has found purpose and meaning. The mundane has purpose. Jesus' redemption rescues us from the despair of meaningless work, because we now work for Him.