

## **2. WHY IS WORK SUCH A PAIN?**

*While waiting to begin please discuss the following questions*

Last week we reminded each other that “work is good.” How have you experienced the goodness of being a worker over the last seven days?

Which aspects of your job do you find frustrating?

What do you think lies behind these frustrations?

What is your “perfect” job?

Do you think there is such a thing as a “perfect” job?

## **1. RECAP: WORK IS GOOD!**

**Defining work**

**How the church has thought about work: Reformation rediscovery... now**

**Genesis 1:26-2:3**

**Humans are made to work: cultivation, service, love and competence**

**God works**

**Work, not idleness is commended**

**Implications:**

**The pursuit of permanent leisure is out!**

**No asceticism: get involved (e.g. Joseph, Daniel, Jesus the carpenter)**

**No elitism**

## **2. WORK IS GRIM! (THORNS AND THISTLES...)**

### **Genesis 3:6-22**

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ecclesiastes 2:10-11**, And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. <sup>11</sup> Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ecclesiastes 2:17-23**, So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. <sup>18</sup> I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, <sup>19</sup> and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. <sup>20</sup> So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, <sup>21</sup> because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. <sup>22</sup> What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? <sup>23</sup> For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 8:20-23**, For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

- **pain**
- **frustration**
- **meaninglessness / vanity**
- **imposed by God**

### **3. IMPLICATIONS**

- **\* don't look to your work for ultimate satisfaction and personal value \***
- **testimony & encouragement:**  
What do you do/say/pray/sing when you're overcome by the pain of work?
- **hope!**

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

"Each man will bear and swallow the discomforts, vexations, weariness, and anxieties in his way of life, when he has been persuaded that the burden was laid upon him by God. From this will arise also a singular consolation: that no task will be so sordid and base, provided you obey your calling in it, that it will not shine and be reckoned very precious in God's sight."  
(John Calvin, *Institutes*, III.XI.6).

#### **4. HOMEWORK: THINKING IT THROUGH**

- How does what we've learned today help us make sense of and manage the frustrations we experience in our job? (work itself, relationships at work, futility of work)
- Is there such a thing as the perfect job? How does what we've learned today help us make wise decisions when looking for jobs? Should you quit a job you don't enjoy?
- What should we do when work is hard? How can we encourage each other?
- Pray about what you've learned

#### **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

*Every good endeavour*, Tim Keller

*Thank God it's Monday*, Mark Greene

*Jesus@work: being a disciple for Christ in the workplace*, Graham Beynon

<http://www.gospelatwork.org.uk/> - Lunchtime meetings for workers in central London (at Aldersgate, Bishopsgate, Blackfriars, Canary Wharf, Covent Garden, Ealing, Euston, Farringdon, Fleet Street, Hammersmith, Kings Cross, London Bridge, Mayfair, Moorgate, Oxford Circus, Westminster)

God@work: 6 sessions on the theology of work (Covent Garden Talks)

<http://www.coventgardentalks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/M@W-Manual-I-Work.pdf>