

TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND DESIGN

"God Put...." Genesis 2:8-15

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INTRO.: What is the American dream? What do people want to accomplish in their time here on earth? Maybe it includes things like getting a good education, finding a good paying job (which you may or may not like), getting married (finding your dream mate) and having a family, purchasing a home, and then retiring (spending the remainder of my life how I want to spend it). Does God have anything to say about any of these things? We're going to spend the next two weeks looking at what the Scriptures have to tell us about work. Once again, our jumping off point will be the book of Genesis as we continue our series, **Trusting God's Plan, Purpose, and Design. God Put** What did God tell Adam when it came to work and what does the rest of the Bible have to say? The four points we're going to focus on are: **The Placement, The Purpose, The Priority, and The Problem.** So, let's begin by reading Genesis 2:8-15 in unison.

Genesis 2:8-15 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

THE PLACEMENT

These verses tell us what God did in relationship to man. First of all, God "planted a garden." God provided a place for Adam & Eve which He specially created.

Fruchtenbaum makes the point that this was in the area of Mesopotamia. "*Eden:*" carries the idea of watering (Psalm 36:9).

Psalm 36:9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Fruchtenbaum continues, The word is found 13 times in the OT; as a plural, three times. The etymological meaning is "*a place that is well-watered*"

We see that this is an amazing place with all kinds of trees that were visually appealing (*pleasing to the eye*) and were good to eat (*good for food*). In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We will look at what God has to say about these trees in future messages. There were four rivers running through the garden and the land was excellent with valuable minerals in it including gold and onyx.

Kenneth A. Mathews says, "Hebrew *'ēden* ("Eden") probably is derived from West Semitic and means "a place of abundant waters." In addition to phonological evidence, this is supported by the allusion to Eden as a well-watered locale in Gen 13:10. Its Hebrew meaning as a common noun is "delight"; whether or not there is an etymological linkage, the sound play of "Eden" suggests even by its name that the garden was luxuriant."

In verses 8 and 15 we are told that God "*put*" Adam in this garden paradise. This word carries with it the meaning of "*rest.*" This garden was made by God for Adam a rest like the Promised Land (Psalm 95:11) was to be for Israel a place of rest (Fruchtenbaum).

Psalm 95:11 So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest."

I believe that Adam's rest comes from the assurance of God's presence. From Genesis 3:8 we can conclude that God was present in the garden.

Genesis 3:8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

What does this have to say to you and me? God is sovereign and He has placed you and me at the place we're at for His plan and purpose. Do you believe you are where you're at for such a time as this? Rest in God's plan and purpose and thank Him that you can rest in the knowledge that He is sovereign. His placement is for our good and His glory. This reminds us of the need to seek God for His direction concerning our lives, our location, and our labor. Not only do we see God's placement of Adam in the garden of Eden but secondly, we see:

THE PURPOSE

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

We see two phrases when it comes to God's purpose in placing Adam in the garden.

"to work it:" this can mean "to work" or "to serve" and so it emphasizes physical activity. It is also used for work in service for God. So, this physical activity was spiritual service to God. (Fruchtenbaum)

Adam's work in the garden was a way to serve God, to be His servant. You and I are here to serve God. The work, which is given and provided by God, is meant as an opportunity to serve God and be a testimony of God.

Henry Morris, "Even though there were as yet no noxious weeds, the ground was so fertile and the plant cover so luxuriant that its growth needed to be channeled and controlled. It is noteworthy that, even in the perfect world as God made it, work was necessary for man's good. The ideal world is not one of idleness and frolic, but one of serious activity and service. Even in the new earth to come, after sin and the curse have been completely removed, Scripture says that "his servants shall serve him" (Revelation 22: 3)."

"take care of it;" (other translations: *keep it*) the Hebrew word means "to guard." This is also connected to obedience to God, Adam's Creator and our Creator; and the One who created the garden where He placed Adam.

Fruchtenbaum, "It also means to keep" in the sense of "obedience," to keep the garden in the sense of guarding would be an act of obedience. The emphasis here is that he is to guard the garden of Eden, not in the sense of external enemies, but rather to guard it in the sense of obeying the commandment of God. It should be noted that labor was part of the perfect state. Nevertheless, at this point, labor was easy with the land producing easily. It was not a toilsome, sweaty labor."

There are some who would say these phrases would be better translated, "to worship and obey." As was mentioned before, the phrase "to take care of" or "to keep" does also carry with it the idea of serving the Lord and obeying, but I don't believe that this precludes the idea of God giving Adam a work to do.

We can conclude, through the use of these two phrases, that work appears as part of our purpose, given by God, before sin enters the picture. Sin certainly complicated work which we will get into more later in this message.

THE PRIORITY

As we consider the above truths from Genesis, what should be my and your priorities?

*Seek God for His direction when it comes to the work He would have you and I do.

It isn't all about how much money I can make or how important a position I can have. It isn't about what will be the easiest job. Am I asking God where the gifts, talents, and abilities He has given me can be best used for His glory.

ILLUS. I will never forget the conversation I had with someone from outside the church when we moved to another ministry many years ago. I was a youth pastor moving to another church as youth pastor after serving 9 years at the current church. His questions:

"So, you're moving to a bigger church?" No

"So, you're getting a better position." No.

"So, you're making more money?" No.

We were convinced that it was where God wanted us to go for a number of reasons, but not the ones that most people would think are the most important.

*Thank God for my work which may be staying at home for your children. You are where you're at for such a time as this. Whatever you do, it is meant to be done for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

*Do not make work my god: I know that it may be challenging to find people who will work, but sometimes we can become a workaholic and lose the priorities that are more important (God and family). Your family will not remember

how much money you made, but they will remember you were too busy for them. Years ago, one of our sons came to me and began to ask if I could do something with him. In mid-sentence he stopped and said something like, "Never mind, you're too busy." Yesterday, I went to a retreat with my son instead of going to the business meeting. It was his Father's Day present to me. I need to tell you that I haven't always got this right and that at times my work has taken over other priorities in my life. I have not been a good example in this at times, and for that I ask your forgiveness.

*Realize my identity: first and foremost, I am a child of God, an emissary of His, who happens to be working as a I have the opportunity to show Jesus to others by my actions and share the gospel with my words.

So, we can see the placement (God put Adam in the garden), the purpose (to work it and take care of it), the priority (seek God, thank God, do not make it my god, realize my identity), and lastly

THE PROBLEM

Why is work so challenging now? There were several consequences after Adam and Eve sinned, including:

Genesis 3:17–19 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. **18** It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. **19** By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

The farmers in this church know the reality of this more than anyone else. If you garden, you know that weeds grow very fast, and you have to work the soil to get things to grow other than weeds. The consequences of the fall affected far more than working the ground. All of this was passed down from Adam.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

How does the entrance of sin affect yours and my work? What are the problems that develop?

*Me: I am a sinner by birth and by practice. This affects my relationships with other people. I am naturally self-seeking, self-absorbed, and selfish.

*Others: I work with sinners. It is imperfect people working with other imperfect people. We are all natural sinners.

Nobody here is a perfect worker, and nobody here has a perfect boss. Part of me wonders if part of the reason working remotely became so popular (there are other reasons as well) is because it allowed people to work without having to interact face to face with other people.

*Physical Conditions: the fall affected the weather, affected us physically

*Spiritual Conditions: Sin caused a separation from God. Adam and Eve had to leave the garden, the place where God walked with them. We needed to be reconciled to God.

Why do we think that work will be easy? I'm saying all this to remind us that we can't do the work God has given us without God's power and strength.

You and I need the power of the Holy Spirit who is living inside of every person who has come to faith in Christ. We're reminded of this today because it is Pentecost Sunday. This is a time to remember the gift of the Holy Spirit which was predicted by Jesus.

John 14:15–17 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— **17** the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

John 14:25–26 "All this I have spoken while still with you. **26** But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 15:26–27 “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. **27** And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:12–15 “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. **14** He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. **15** All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Jesus repeats this promise prior to His ascension as recorded in Acts 1.

Acts 1:4–5 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5** For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:6–8 So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” **7** He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

When Jesus ascended the Holy Spirit came to indwell and fill believers as is seen in Acts 2. The Day of Pentecost, in the Jewish calendar, was the day of the annual feast that was called The Feast of Harvests, or the Feast of the Ingathering, or sometimes it was called the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost: 50 days after the celebration of Passover). In Acts 2 we see some amazing things happening as signs of the filling of the Holy Spirit filling believers. There was the sound like the blowing of a mighty wind, people were able to speak in languages they hadn’t spoken in before as the Holy Spirit enabled them. The people listening heard the words in their own language. Peter then preaches a message telling them this was predicted in the Old Testament, and he shares the gospel, telling them to repent and be baptized. Guess what??? Three thousand people came to faith! Do you believe the Holy Spirit gives power to the believer? Paul tells us that believers have the same power that it took to raise Jesus from the dead!!

Ephesians 1:18–23 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19** and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, **20** which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, **21** far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. **22** And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, **23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Philippians 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

SO WHAT???

In Acts 17 we have the account of when the Apostle Paul was in the city of Athens. He was greatly distressed that there were so many idols in the city. They had gods for everything that you could imagine. So, Paul reasoned with people in the synagogue (both Jews and God-fearing Greeks). He also did this in the marketplace with anyone who happened to be there. He got together with a group of philosophers who took him to the meeting of the Areopagus, where people gathered who spent their days talking about and listening to the latest ideas. They wanted Paul to explain what he believed which they considered strange ideas. He begins by recognizing that they are religious, even having an altar with this inscription: *To AN UNKNOWN GOD* in case, they missed one. Paul proceeds to tell them about this unknown God.

Acts 17:24–30 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. **25** And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. **26** From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. **27** God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. **28** ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ **29** “Therefore

since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. **30** In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

We can find it relatively easy to compartmentalize our lives and attempt to separate our work from our walk with God. This is dangerous ground.

*Do I have a relationship with God?

*How is my walk with God going?

*Am I seeking God as I use my gifts, talents, and abilities for His glory?

*In my work, am I looking to God, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring glory to God in all I do and say?

