

TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND DESIGN

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

May 26, 2024

INTRO.: This is **Memorial Day Weekend** and as you came in there was a wreath commemorating the sacrifice of those who gave their lives in service to their country. Tomorrow, Memorial Day, is not a celebration, it is a remembrance. We are grateful for the freedoms we have in this country, and we recognize that they came at a high cost, the sacrifice of many lives. In your gatherings tomorrow take some time to thank the Lord for these freedoms, for those who gave their lives, and pray for comfort for the families affected. **Let's pray.**

Why the big deal about work? After all, the American Dream has been described by many to include looking for a vocation where I can make good money, getting a good education, landing that awesome job, finding a person to marry, buy a house, have some kids, work 30-40 years so I can retire and do what I want to. Does the Bible have anything to say about all of this? You may be thinking, "Well, it obviously does because this guy is spending two weeks talking about work." You have come to the right conclusion.

GOD PUT... PART 1

Last week we looked at Genesis 2:8-15, and highlighted the following points: **THE PLACEMENT** (God put Adam in the garden God planted in Eden), **THE PURPOSE** (to work it and take care of it; thus work was not a result of the fall. The consequences of the fall made work much more difficult and painful), **THE PRIORITY** (since work comes from God I should seek God for His direction; how much money it pays is not the first consideration, thank God for my work, not make work be my god, and realize my identity is not in my work as I am, first and foremost, a child of God who happens to be a pastor. I am His emissary at my work place), and **THE PROBLEM** (There are several problems: 1) me: I'm a sinner who is really good at sinning 2) Others: I work with other sinners who are really good at sinning 3) Consequences of the fall: physically and spiritually.)

GOD PUT... PART 2

This morning we're going to jump off from there and look at **THE WORK** and **THE DREAM**. To do this we're going to look at some other passages and read them together.

THE WORK

We are going to use Genesis 2 as our jumping off point. What do we know about work from Genesis 2? First, we can see:

WHO?

Who provides the work that we have and who has put us where we are now? I believe that God is the answer to both of those questions. Let me remind you of what we looked at last week. Let's read these two verses and you tell me the common denominator. (Jeff Brandt would be so proud of me for using a math term in my sermon)

Genesis 2:8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.

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.

God planted a garden in Eden and He **PUT** Adam in the garden. Not only did He **PUT** Adam in the garden but He also gave him a job. Adam was tasked to work it and take care of it. God, in His sovereignty has **PUT** you in the place where you are and provided you with the **WORK** you are to do. One caveat to this I would say: work from Him is meant to bring glory to Him and not be contrary to His Word. In the Old Testament God is declared to be **JEHOVAH-JIREH**: *the Lord will provide*. This commemorates how God provided a ram in the place of Isaac.

Genesis 22:14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

With this in mind we should seek God for where He wants us and what He wants us to do. In Matthew 6, Jesus reminds His followers (us included) that God is the One who provides, the same One who takes care of the flowers and the birds. This is Jesus' conclusion:

Matthew 6:31–33 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Since the Lord is the One who provides the work this brings us to the next question.

HOW?

How should you and I work? Last week we were reminded of this Scripture:

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

I also want to look at another Scripture as it relates to our work. Before we read this passage, I want to say that the Bible does not condone slavery, and certainly God doesn’t condone the way the Roman and Greek cultures treated slaves. They were treated terribly as if they were just tools to be sold and discarded. It was believers who were in the forefront of abolishing the slave trade in many places in the world. What Paul is speaking of in Ephesians 6 could be compared to the relationship of the worker and their boss. So, let’s read this together.

Ephesians 6:5–9 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Let’s break these verses down into smaller segments.

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, **obey** your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

The word, *obey*, is a present tense command. Every person has somebody over them and how you and I relate to authority is very important for our Christian testimony and witness. We are commanded to obey and sometimes this can be hard. As a follower of Christ, we should relate to others better, even to those in authority.

How should our obedience look?

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters **with respect and fear**, and **with sincerity of heart**, just as you would obey Christ.

We are called to respect and fear, which actually has the idea of respect and honor. We are to do this with sincerity of heart; being genuine. May I encourage each of us to pray for our bosses? We would do well to remember they have to answer to God for how they treat those under their authority. How does Paul describe this obedience?

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, **just as you would obey Christ**.

As you we do this, first and foremost we are obeying Christ. This also tells us that if they tell us to do something that is contrary to Scripture (dishonest, illegal, immoral) that we must first obey the Lord. This might even be an opportunity to share our testimony as to why we can’t do what has been asked. Do it with humility and with much prayer.

How are we to work?

Ephesians 6:6 Obey them not only to win their favor **when their eye is on you**, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

We are to do what we should whether they are watching us or not. One of our goals should be to be such a good worker that they would trust us to work even when they’re not around. I so appreciate the work of all our staff here: pastors, children’s ministry director, office staff and sextants. They work hard even when not being watched and I have absolute trust in them. How important is this?

Ephesians 6:6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, **doing the will of God from your heart**.

This is part of God's will. Many people want to know God's will for their lives but are they doing God's will as clearly revealed in the Word of God?

How are we to work?

Ephesians 6:7-8 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

"serve:" this is a present tense participle

We should be willing to do more than the minimum. How many businesses have a hard time finding good workers? Many years ago, when I worked in a factory, there was a fellow who was a believer, but who was not a hard worker. This nullified his testimony to unbelievers around him.

"wholeheartedly:" with everything I have and with God's strength and power. What can be accomplished with God?

"as if you were serving the Lord:" God is really our boss and the One we are working for. Don't you want to sense His smile and please Him?

How about bosses?

Ephesians 6:9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Paul includes those in authority and reminds them that they should treat the workers in a godly way. The ultimate Master is God and we all have to answer to Him, even bosses. If you are in a position of authority pray for those who are responsible to you. Not only do I want to look at the work this morning but secondly:

THE DREAM

I see many people living for this dream. I am referring to working to the goal of retirement, when I get to do what I want to do. It's now MY time. Now, I want to say that I am not against retirement, and I don't believe that God says a person can't retire. I do believe there are problems when that becomes my ultimate goal with the idea that this is now MY time to do whatever I want.

I first want to look at the Who, that is, who is in charge of my time here on earth and then How does this affect me?

WHO?

As we think about time, I want to look at a few Scriptures. Let's take some time to read these together.

James 4:13-17 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Let's look at this passage a little more closely. It begins with:

James 4:13 **Now listen**, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

The first words in the NIV are "*now listen*," and in other translations it is translated, "*come now*." It is a present tense command. For all those who say what follows, James is commanding them to listen.

So, all that lay out all their plans about where they will go, what business they will be involved in and the money they will make listen to what follows. James is not saying that you and I can't plan but he wants us to know something about those plans.

James 4:14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

We may think we know what is going to happen but do any of us truly know? Is there anybody here that has had their plans changed? Sometimes people ask me what I plan on doing and my response is, "This is what I plan on doing but the Lord could change that in a hurry."

What is our life compared to in this verse? We are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

James 4:15-16 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.

Who is in charge of our time? It isn't us!! Jesus tells the following parable of a rich man and his plans.

Luke 12:16-21 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. **17** He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' **18** "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. **19** And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" **20** "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' **21** "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

Jesus is not saying it's wrong to do well financially, but in all this man's plans who had he left out? His God was all that he could accumulate and he had no consideration of a relationship with God. Since God is in charge of our time who should we seek to find out how the time should be spent?

James 4:17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

We are instructed in who is in charge of our time and we need to seek God's will as we serve Him.

HOW?

Let's look at another passage that talks about how we should spend our time. Once again we will read it together.

Ephesians 5:15-17 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

"be very careful:" ("see" in other translations) This also a present tense command: see, consider, carefully evaluate how you live (walk).

"making the most of:" This is also a present tense verb and is something we need to be constantly doing. In other translations it is *"redeeming the time."* The idea is one of buying back, realizing that time is an incredibly valuable commodity.

Somebody once advertised as follows: 'LOST, yesterday, somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes. No reward offered, for they are gone for ever'. (Horace Mann)

Jonathan Edwards, the philosopher-theologian who became God's instrument in the 'Great Awakening' in America in 1734-5, wrote in the seventieth of his famous *Resolutions* just before his twentieth birthday: 'Resolved: Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can.'

Do we have a sense of urgency with the gospel?

Hebrews 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,
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Retirement does provide more opportunity to be with family and to travel, but can I urge each of us to seek God for how He wants us to use our time. You have more time to serve God, being involved in ministry inside and outside of church. So many of our retired folks are doing many wonderful things.

*Visiting shut ins

*Providing needed rides

*Helping at AWANA

- *Serving in the church
- *Going into the North Central Secure Treatment Unit
- *Delivering meals/gifts during special times of the year
- *Greeters
- *Mentor Moms & Child care for MOPS
- *Be a prayer warrior
- *Campground ministry
- *Active Retired Men in Service (ARMS)
- *Discipling & mentoring those younger

Sometimes I have heard this, "I have done my time, now I need to let the younger people do it."

Or, "Those that are younger don't want an older person around."

Titus 2 speaks of how the older need to be taught so that they can teach the younger. You'd be surprised to see how many younger people want to hear from the older people. When I came to Danville, I treasured the time I spent with Pastor Beveridge. I would ask him questions and just sit and listen. He finished well.

Young people need to see the older people finish well. Older, godly people have two things that are necessary. Do you know what they are? Wisdom and experience and you don't get those two without being older. Our younger men need older men to speak into their lives and younger women need older women to speak into their lives. You can't do that from a distance.

One of my goals is to continue to invest in younger men like older men have done with me over the years. We need older men to be a part of the elder & deacon boards. We need older women to be part of the deaconess board and both to be serving in other areas. I realize (as I am getting older) there is a different level of energy but there are still things we can do to serve.

How many here have ever received a little 3 x 5 card in the mail from Connie Egli?

As an older man or woman maybe, you can invest in a younger man or woman. The command in Matthew 28 is "make disciples." You can certainly do that in your families with your grandchildren and even great grandchildren. How about helping at a youth event or even being a youth leader? There is the welcome desk, greeters, kitchen people, and Vacation Bible School. We have had several people go on mission trips. We have a woman come in every week and stuff bulletins. She also helps with whatever ministry projects that need to be accomplished. She is an amazing lady who is using her time to help advance the kingdom of God.

Emma Reynolds, who went home to be with Jesus, sharpened the pencils that are in the pews that people could use to fill out connect cards, take sermon notes, and other things.

I urge you to not fold up your gifts, talents, and abilities. Redeem the time and continue to make a difference for Jesus. I realize that several of our folks have health challenges (and that might be you) but you can still be a prayer warrior and an encourager. Don't put yourself on the shelf. Seek God for how you can serve. It isn't our time – it's God's time.

SO WHAT???

- *Do I have a relationship with God?
- *Am I seeking God as I use my gifts, talents, and abilities for His glory?
- *In what ways am I using the time God has given for His kingdom?
- *Do I need to ask how I can help with the ministry?

