

I Wish I Could Just Be a Carpenter Again

It is early on Friday morning and I will soon be flying from Chicago back to the home I love in Spring where my wife, who happens to be my best friend, and I live. I fly back to preach to the best local church I know - Christchurch, which is named after the God whom I love supremely. It has been a busy week and to God's glory we have preached to thousands of people and have seen probably three to four thousand decisions by young people to dedicate themselves to Christ and a life of moral excellence. I sympathize with George Whitefield, one of the premier preachers of "The Great Awakening," who said, "Lord, I am weary in Thy work, but not of Thy work."

In the early morning hours only two people had beaten me to the modest breakfast bar in the hotel in which I am staying. I was rather rushed to get back to the room and write the Pastor's Word before my ride picks me up for O'Hare Field. The two people of whom I mentioned had slipped into casual conversation. I was getting some breakfast together while waiting for my tea to steep. I had not purposely come to eavesdrop, but I could not escape it. From what I had gathered, these two men had climbed their ladders in life and now here they were - two middle aged men reminiscing about places they had traveled and cities they liked or disliked. One man's voice softened as he reflected upon a less complicated time in his life, when he wasn't busy directing a big business and all the micro details that entailed. Then he paused, sighed and said, "I wish I could just be a carpenter again." While I was up at the bar looking for a spoon, an older gentleman dressed for what looked to be a long, hard and very hot day in manual labor, showed an almost forgotten politeness as he motioned for me to go before him. We arrived at the counter at the same time and I insisted he go before me. He refused to go before me and for a moment got lost in trying to adjust his hearing aid. The old gentleman got his breakfast together while I was finishing up and he took a seat at the table with the man who wished he could just be a carpenter again. The boss man looked at his help and questioned, "Did you have a good night's sleep?" The older man had not yet gotten his hearing aids working properly and answered a question that had not been asked. In patience, his boss posed the question again, just a little louder, "Did you sleep well?" The humble old carpenter now heard his raised voice and replied, "Oh yeah, sure."

I came into my room and I found myself fighting some emotions at the conversation and brief interaction that I just heard from my nameless new friends. In the overheard conversation a beautiful diamond of truth was exposed. Allow me to share with you its three facets:

1. Don't get so busy you stop doing what you enjoy doing.

In the book The Peter Principle by Dr. J. Lawrence Peters, he makes this overall claim: many people get promoted until they reach the place of incompetence. Dr. Peters refers to a man that works on the plant floor and gets promoted to shift leader, then floor manager, next he does so well he is promoted to an office job with paper work and then he eventually becomes a vice president of the corporation. Now the spring in his step disappears and we don't hear his usual whistle we used to hear after he clocked in and came whistling to work with

the joy of one of the “seven dwarfs.” Peters went on to say this is why golf courses are filled with vice presidents. They are the unhappy drones that now no longer have use by the queen and do not have the ability to pollinate. So the only usefulness the hive can attain is if the drone bee is out of the hive. Now we are much more thoughtful of our own than bees; we do not drive them out of the hive - we just find work for them to do outside the interference with the hive. So if visiting personel from another hive comes, get the drone or vice president to take him golfing. The point is, if the vice president finds out he was happiest as floor manager where he was still a leader of men but had his hands on the hardware instead of paper trails, then it would be wise to ask for his old job back. The world may call this demotion, but for this man, it is a return to doing what he does best.

Many a pastor reaches my age and cannot wait to start planning his retirement. And guess what his retirement consists of for a pastor? He becomes an itinerant preacher, taking every venue he can, to just preach. His life became so busy with micro management, counseling and the details that every office has, that when it comes right down to it, he cannot wait to get back to his main job - preaching the Word of God. I am so blessed to pastor a wonderful group of people who allow me the freedom to do what I was called by God to do - preach.

Whatever the will of God is for your life, you will naturally enjoy doing it. Never stop doing what you are called and love to do! Solomon said as his life drew to an end, *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10). The wise man was saying, you only have one life, it soon will be over, so do what you are supposed to do - and do it with all your might!

2. Always treasure the value of the people you live and work with.

I was impressed when I heard the boss inquire of the hard-working laborer, if he had had a good night’s sleep. I was impressed that here was a man who never forgot his roots. He did not look at himself as superior. Evidently he didn’t feel his job was “us” against “them.” There was no division between the owner and the common laborer. There was no need for a union to negotiate between them. Here were two men, a boss and his worker, enjoying each other’s company and preparing for a day of team effort. I like the acrostic that some businesses and athletic teams use as a motto: T.E.A.M. = **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**ccomplishes **M**ore.

Show me a field commander that is loved by his men and I’ll show you a general who always valued the rank of even a buck private. Show me a team that consistently wins and I will show you a John Wooden or a Paul “Bear” Bryant who constantly identified with their players. Show me a successful restaurateur and I’ll show you an owner who loves to get his hands in the dough and cook along with his workers. Paul understood the value of those with whom he ministered when the Spirit of God enabled him to write, *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep”* (Romans 12:15).

3. Our Lord never stopped being a carpenter.

The first thirty years of Christ's life, He was a carpenter. When He launched into His ministry, He never stopped building. We hear this from His own testimony, "...Upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18). Our Carpenter is still building His mighty edifice with His own nail pierced hands.

As we see our Lord beaten, bruised and bleeding, we read these words, "*And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him...*" (John 19:17, 18a). Jesus now ends his life as he started it. In His youth, carrying the lumber to Joseph's shop to get the day's work done. Now our Lord is carrying the lumber to the workshop on the top of the hill to get eternity's job done. As our Carpenter dies on the last piece of lumber He would carry on earth, He finished the job on earth but reminded us He never stopped being a carpenter and would still be doing the work in the Father's Shop on another hill far, far away, "*In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*" (John 14: 2,3). Do you not love our Carpenter?

-Pastor Pope-