

The Gospel at Work

Selected passages from Genesis 1-3

Introduction

The title of today's message and this series, borrowed from Sebastian Traewick and Greg Gilbert

At the Road we talk a lot about being “gospel-centered”

Our way of saying that Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done shapes and empowers every aspect of the Christian life.

Why is it so important for us to connect the dots between the gospel and our work?

Avg. 40 hrs/week for 40 yrs = 83,200

Other than sleeping, we spend more time working than we do at any other thing. Even the time we spend with our families typically involves some type of work.

Friends, we can't be Christians and divorce the majority of our lives from our faith. No, in fact, I'd like to show you throughout this series that our work is the primary way we display the glory of God and live out our faith publicly.

So what's the point of this series?

I want us to see how the gospel gives genuine meaning to all of our work, and specifically how the gospel allows us to offer all of our work, itself (whether you're a janitor or a judge, a doctor or a stay at home mom) we can offer our work itself up to God as an act of worship.

Without the ballast of the gospel, we're going to fall into one of two traps.

1. We're going to view work as a necessary evil, we're constantly going to be frustrated by it and we'll try to do as little of it as possible.
2. We're going to make work our God. We must avoid the trap of asking our work to do for us what only God can. Work is an incredible blessing but it makes a terrible God. If you try to seek your identity from your work, if you try to find your ultimate satisfaction from your work, ultimately it can destroy you.

Right now each one of us is probably somewhere in between those 2. My prayer for this series is that seeing God's design for our work through the lens of the gospel will give us a new and powerful sense of meaning that will enable us to persevere through the frustrations in our work and offer our work up as an act of worship to our heavenly father.

If we're going to find genuine, deep meaning in our work, we're going to have to see how our work fits into the story of the gospel. If you follow the plot line of the gospel here's what you see: There are four major acts 1) Creation, 2) Fall, 3) Redemption, 4) Restoration. So let's look at work in light of these 4 major categories.

Creation

The opening sentence of the Bible tells us something extraordinary about God. God works.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Over the six days of creation, God displays his creative potential, his masterful skill in constructing the universe we live in. From the greatest galaxy (which we can't even number) to the smallest cell which contains solar systems within themselves, All creation praises God for the works of his hands!

Psalms 33:8-9 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

Not only does God work, all the time, ***but God delights in his work.*** His work gives him pleasure.

Genesis 1:31-2:2 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the

host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

Where do you and I come into the picture? This is where this gets interesting and exciting – God created men and women in his image.

Genesis 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

So God created man and woman and the first thing he does is gives them their work assignments. He employs them to be managers over creation. Our God who works, delegates the care of creation to mankind so that we get to share in God's work.

After giving mankind his assignment, God plants a garden...

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

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

In the middle of an untamed Earth God plants a paradise garden and essentially, God tells Adam to make the rest of creation like the garden of Eden. All of our work is like God's work in creation and in planting the garden of Eden. In God's work he brought order out of chaos and out of raw materials God brings beauty, structure, elegant design, and a context for all creation to be healthy and flourish.

God is continuing his work through the work of man. In the wisdom of God bound up with our design as human beings is that God is caring for his creation through our work. Do you realize what that means? It means all of our lawful work, whether you're changing the diaper of a precious baby or negotiating a multi million dollar business deal is work that God is doing through you to provide for and care for his creation.

This is the incredible value of our work and why it is a mark of human dignity because God has created us in his image to be like him and work like him. We have been created for fellowship with God in and through our work. God works through us and cares for and provides for his creation the things we do

If you think about it...

All work is like gardening. In gardening you take the raw potential of the earth and you cultivate it to bring forth its potential for the good of mankind.

Farming takes the physical material of soil and seed and produces food. Music takes the physics of sound and rearranges it into something beautiful and thrilling that brings meaning to life. When we take fabric and make a piece of clothing, when we push a broom and clean up a room, when we use technology to harness the forces of electricity, when we take an unformed, naïve human mind and teach it a subject, when we teach people how to resolve their relational disputes, when we take simple materials and turn them into a poignant work of art—we are continuing God's work of forming, filling, and subduing.

Summarize... what else? Pair down...

Fall

Even though God created paradise and gave mankind the dream job and everything we would ever need to be happy in him forever, we rebelled against God's love and goodness. In the garden of Eden mankind exchanged the glory of God for a lie. We gave paradise away (we flushed it down the toilet).

When mankind fell into sin, it fractured our relationship with everything. Our relationship with God, with other humans, and even our relationship with the material creation was broken. Now, everything in creation is broken. Nothing works as it should.

Look at the curse that our sins brought

Genesis 3:17-19 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Look at this description

Look at this description

- The ground is cursed
- In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life
- The ground will produce thorns and thistles
- By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground
- 4:12 After Cain killed Able God said, "When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength.

After the fall all of our work is accompanied pain and frustrations. These thorns and thistles take many forms don't they?

Farmer – irregular weather patterns, insects, disease, pigweed

Truck driver – accidents, damaged goods, impossible expectations from your boss and your customers

Teacher – some parents won't cooperate in the education of their children, despite your best efforts some kids are more of a disruption to a class, sometimes it seems like the most incompetent people rise to leadership and administration positions.

The fall is the reason there are bosses who are sometimes oppressive, employees who do as little work as possible and constantly cheat and manipulate the system, coworkers who sometimes work more against us than with us.

What about your work at home for your family? How many parents have worked your fingers to the bone for your family often to find your spouse or children completely unappreciative? Why does it seem like we always work and work to get ahead and just when we think we're getting caught up something unexpected pops up? Your car breaks down. You get an unexpected bill. You get sick or have an unexpected health issue?

There is no work that we do under the sun that is not fraught with pain, difficulty, and frustration.

Just yesterday I was changing the faucet under my bathroom sink... part fell and hit me in the forehead

Genesis 3 ends with God driving Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden. They are exiled from paradise into a hazardous and untamed world out from under the umbrella of God's blessing and fellowship.

Redemption

If that was the end this would be a very dark and dismal story, wouldn't it? In the garden God did give a ray of hope. Before God sent them out of the garden, he first covered their nakedness and shame. There was a sacrifice. Blood was shed. God protected his wayward children by covering them with garments of animal skins. And God gave a promise, really the first hint of the gospel, that one day the seed (offspring) of the woman would come into the world and crush Satan's head and undo the curse our sin had brought.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree;

Do you see what this means? The Son of God came from Heaven to rescue his people. And look how he came into the world... He came as a blue collar worker. The people who know Jewish culture and history tell us that Jesus spent the majority of his life working as a carpenter. At the appointed time he assumed his role as our prophet and priest. He became the Great High Priest who would not only offer the perfect sacrifice, he would become the perfect sacrifice.

It's in the work of Christ that sin is defeated and the curse has begun to be removed. He went to the cross and he became cursed for us to remove the thorns and thistles.

The work of Jesus on the cross means that you and I were so messed up that Jesus had to come and die for us, but it also means that he loved us so much that he wanted to come and die for us.

Friend, if you're here this morning and you are not yet a believer. We are glad you're here. I hope that you could look around, and although we're by no means perfect, but I hope you can see the love of Jesus in our midst. Look around and see the beginnings of the curse being lifted. We want you to be a part of the family of Jesus with us. The way you become part of the family is by turning away from your sins and trusting in the work of Jesus to forgive you and heal you.

This is where we begin to see how that being united to Christ by faith gives new meaning to our work. While we are still in a fallen world, and yes the effects of the curse are still around us, we understand what God is up to and we are part of God's continuing work to rescue a fallen world.

The implications of the Gospel are vast for our work, let me just touch on a few.

1. We have a new identity in Christ. If you are in Christ you are part of the royal family. You are a child of the King. You already have all the status you could ever want and more! We are free to work as an act of worship. We don't have to use work to make a name for ourselves.
2. We understand the world is broken by sin, so we're not surprised or undone by the thorns in the places God has called us to work. Our jobs are God's means of shining the light of the gospel into the fallen world.
3. When our lives are renewed by the grace of God, the lost world around us gets to see the evidence that God is at work. Think about what it means when things go wrong in the work place but they see in us people who, instead of complaining trust in God. When we're treated unfairly we don't get even we forgive and forbear. When we mess something up, we don't have to lie or hide it. We can be honest at work about our mistakes and trust God with the consequences we suffer. In short, the fallen world around us needs to see testimonies of lives that don't make sense unless the gospel is true.

Restoration

Christ rising from the dead was the first fruits of what will ultimately be an entirely renewed material creation. Sometimes we think about Heaven as some celestial place we all go to and spend forever when we die. In reality,

when the Bible talks about Heaven, it talks about the new heavens and new Earth. In fact the picture we're given in Revelation 21 and 22 is that what we think of as Heaven comes down to Earth.

Now, I know some of you have been looking forward to an eternity sitting on your cloud and strumming your harp, but the Bible's teaching on the future that awaits us is far more robust than that. In a completely renewed universe without a trace of the curse, without a single ounce of sin, the Bible hints at the fact that we will worship God productively, partially through work.

Isaiah 65:17-23 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. 21 They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them.

Tree of Life...

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Niggle and the Leaf