

**Victory of the Lamb // Pastor Ben Sadler // May 30, 2021**  
**Sermon series: Called // Theme: God's Call to Employees**

**<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. <sup>6</sup> Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. <sup>7</sup> Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, <sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.**

“Love what you do and you’ll never work a day in your life.” That’s sounds like pretty good advice. We should find work that fits our natural talents and skills and passions. But it also gives a false promise. The promise is that if you could just find the right job then will finally be happy, then work wouldn’t feel like work.

I think I’ve found the best possible job for me. I’m wired for this work. I love to read, study, preach, teach, counsel. There is nothing else that I would rather be doing. But can I confess something to you? There have been times when I have wanted to give up. There have been times when I have contemplated quitting. I’ve wondered if I’m really making a difference. If what I’m doing really matters. And the only thing that keeps me in the ministry is the fact that there is nothing else I think I could do.

How about you? Even if you found the work your love, does it ever feel meaningless? Do you ever just want to give up, even from the best jobs? Why is that? Why can we sometimes feel so burned out?

About 3000 years ago, King Solomon put these feelings into words. He was the third king in Israel. His father, David, had set him up for success. His father fought all their enemies and gave him a great inheritance. In addition, the Lord had given Solomon the gift of wisdom to govern and lead his kingdom. So Solomon was set up in the perfect situation. He had the freedom and money to pursue the work he wanted to do. He built up his kingdom. Constructed great buildings like a huge palace and the temple of the Lord. But later on in his life he reflects back on all that he had worked for and he wonders if it has any lasting value.

**<sup>17</sup> So I hated life, because the work that is done **under the sun** was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. <sup>18</sup> I hated all the things I had toiled for **under the sun**, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. <sup>19</sup> And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill **under the sun**. This too is meaningless. <sup>20</sup> So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor **under the sun**. <sup>21</sup> For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. <sup>22</sup> What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor **under the sun**? <sup>23</sup> All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless. (Ecclesiastes 2:17-23)**

Five times in this short section Solomon uses the phrase “under the sun”. What this means is that he is looking at his life at the street level. He is looking at his life based on what you can observe. When he just looks at his life through pure observation as if there is nothing “over the sun” there doesn’t seem to be any good reason to work hard and gain wealth and accomplishments. He knows that soon he will die and he can’t take it with him. He will have to give all of his wealth to someone else. And who knows if

they will squander all that I've accomplished. Actually, that's exactly what happened. And even while he was still living, he calls work "toil" because it brings grief and pain during the day and anxiety at night. And again this is the best case scenario. This is the best work that a person could do.

So is there any hope? We are continuing our sermon series **Called**. In this series, we are looking at the different callings that we have in our lives. We have looked at Motherhood and marriage and childhood. And today we are calling to look at our callings at work as an employee. And the question that I want to answer is this: **How can we find meaning at work when our jobs seem so meaningless?**

To answer that question, we are going to go back to our reading from Ephesians 6. And Paul instructs those who have the most meaningless work possible: Slaves. In the first century in the Roman Empire, there were only two classes of people: slaves or free. That was it. And if you had the bad fortune of being a slave then you had no rights, no ability to own property or possession. In the eyes of the Empire, you were the property of someone else. This could be the most meaningless job that you could imagine. No hope for advancement. No hope for a family or property. Little hope for freedom. And yet, Paul was convinced that through the Christian message of God's good news he could lead them to find true, lasting meaning even as a slave.

He says, <sup>5</sup>**Slaves, obey your earthly masters...not only to win their favor when their eye is on you...** The obvious question to ask Paul is, "Why? Why obey their earthly masters? What good is it going to do?" We have that same question even in the best jobs. Why keep doing what we are doing? Why keep working? What is the point? If that is the question we have for even the best jobs, how much more for this kind of pointless work?

Well, if you would read the rest of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, you would find that Paul doesn't just believe in a life "under the sun". Paul believes that there is an incredible life beyond the sun.

He tells slaves, <sup>5</sup>**Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.** <sup>6</sup>**Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.**

Paul says, "Obey your earthly masters in respect and fear, not just when they are watching, because you don't actually belong to them. You belong to Christ. There is someone "beyond the sun." We don't just have earthly masters or earthly bosses, we have a God and Savior beyond the sun. That is who we really work for.

<sup>7</sup>**Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people,** <sup>8</sup>**because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.**

Not only is there someone beyond the sun, there is life beyond the sun. Jesus is going to come back on the Last Day. And Paul says that he is going to reward each person for the good they have done no matter what their status, slave or free. A slave might not have gotten a bonus for their hard work, but they would be rewarded on the Last Day.

You might not be recognized for your faithful devotion to your Savior at your job, but Paul says that on the Last Day, when Jesus returns and resurrects your body you will be rewarded for whatever good you have done.

There is someone and something beyond the sun. This life as we see it now is that the whole story. There is going to be a final resurrection. There is going to be a judgment Day. There is going to be a day where your faithful service is recognized. But we don't always think about that. In fact, I wonder if we think about it at all. We are so conditioned to think that what we see is all that there is.

Have you ever seen that movie "The Truman Show"? The movie is about a man named Truman played by Jim Carrey. He lives in this enclosed world under a dome. And his whole life is being recorded as reality TV. Everyone else in the village is an actor. Everything is scripted. But he doesn't know that. He does feel like his life is fake, like his life is meaningless. But he doesn't know what to do about it.

Then there is one woman in the show named Lauren Garland, that tells him what is really going on. She tells him there is a world outside of this world, a real world. By the end of the movie, Truman believes the truth and lives to break out of this fake dome.

That is very similar to our situation. We look at our lives under the sun and it feels meaningless. Somedays we don't know why we are working so hard. We don't see how it does any real good. But that is why we need God's Word. It shows us that God broke through our dome and came into this world. Jesus came to rescue us from the meaningless work of trying to earn our value by our work. He became one of us to set us free from the enslaving nature of a meaningless life. In Jesus, you have gone from being a slave to a son.

You are forgiven, loved, and accepted and brought into a much bigger story. You see there is one major difference between the Truman Show and the story that God is telling. In the Truman Show, Lauren tells Truman to escape the fake dome and break out of the real world. In God's story, Jesus is coming back again not to break us out of here, but to blow the lid off the place. He is going to resurrect and renew this world and make it all new. And he will reward you for all the work that you have done in his name.

**So How can we find meaning at work when our jobs seem so meaningless? Remember who you work for.**

You don't work for your boss, you work for your heavenly Father. You don't need the approval of your co-workers, you already have the approval of Jesus. You don't work for a bonus that will quickly be spent and forgotten. You work for the eternal reward that Jesus will give you on the Last Day.

Because we know this bigger story and because we know who we work for, no matter what your job is, Paul is telling us to: **Work hard because you work for the Lord.**

Martin Luther, the Reformer, had a great quote about what it means to be a hard working Christian. He said, **"The Christian shoemaker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship."**— **Martin Luther.** I love that quote. A Christian shows who God is not just by their words but also by their work ethic. When we put in a honest day's work, we show the world something about who God is. "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

If there was nothing beyond the sun, if this life as we see it now was all there is, then all work, even the best work this world offers would be meaningless. It would be a chasing after the wind. But someone beyond the sun, the Son of God, Jesus Christ has broken into this world and has shown us the real story through his resurrection. There is something beyond the sun. I hope you can find work that you love to

do. But even the best work, even on the best days, in this world as it is now will sometimes feel like toil. Even if you love what you do, work is still going to be work. But even the most challenging and frustrating jobs can have eternal meaning and eternal significance when you remember who you really work for. So, work hard at whatever God is calling you to do. Because you don't just work for earthly masters; you work for the Lord. Amen.