

A New Understanding of Work

1. Intro

- Most of us remember with great affection the time Mike & Katie and the kids spent with us here at church recently
- It was wonderful to be encouraged for a time by them before returning to the mission field in Tanzania

- And while we were greatly encouraged ... I wonder when you heard them speak of their work back in Munguishi Bible College ... whether like me you were thinking to yourself
 - "Wow ... Mike and Katie are so brave"
 - "They're way more committed to Jesus than me"
 - "I could never be a missionary overseas"

- Often when we meet a family like the Taylor's we end up asking ourselves
 - Where should mission work fit into my life
 - How should I think of the work I do vs mission work
 - Is it an either/or option > either a full-time missionary or full-time worker?
 - Or is there an overlap
 - How am I meant to understand the work God has given me to do ... the mission work I see others doing
- That's what we're looking at this morning ... a new understanding of work
- Three things
 - A mandate for mission work
 - A method for mission work
 - A motive for mission work

2. A Mandate for Mission Work

- So far in our series on Faith and Work we have seen that
 - work is good,
 - has dignity and
 - is meant to carry on the mandate God has given humanity
 - to fill and subdue the earth
 - by building communities that love and serve each other

- The reality of course ... is all of that has been compromised by the Fall
- The reality of sin means that at times work can
 - Be frustrating

- Seem futile
- Not as fruitful as we would hope
- So far we've been focusing on what we might call 'creation work'
 - As we saw in the beginning in Genesis 1-2 ... God is a God who works at creating and sustaining the heavens and the earth
 - And God has given us the mandate to carry on his creation work by building and serving the communities God has placed us in
- However, ever since the Fall ... God has been engaging in a new type of work
 - And its the work of salvation
- Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve the garden ... mankind has
 - alienated themselves from God
 - rejected his authority
 - lived life according to their will
- While God has made it clear that such a rejection of him deserves judgment ...
 - He's also a God of love and mercy and grace
 - Ever since that moment ... he's been working to save people
 - You see it in the way he saved
 - Noah and his family
 - Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt
 - Ninevites through preaching of Jonah
 - And his plan to save culminated in the death and resurrection of Jesus
- We see this new work of God in the NT when Jesus says to the Jews after he healed a man on the Sabbath
 - **John 5:17** – *"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."*
 - God is working ... and so too is Jesus
- Later ... just before he is about to be arrested and crucified he prays to the Father
 - **John 17:4** – *"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the **work** you gave me to do."*
- And what is the work the Father has given Jesus to do?
 - It's the work of saving people by the cross

- God's work of salvation is fulfilled in Christ ... as you read the NT ... it isn't completed in Christ
- That is ... just as he gives us a mandate to carry on his creation work
 - God also gives us a mandate to carry on his salvation work
- So in the gospels we see that Jesus work of salvation is a work that is to be carried on by his disciples
 - **Matthew 9:37-38** – *"Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"¹*
- Jesus' work was to come and seek and save the lost
 - To reap a harvest – so to speak ... of people who would be rescued from death to life
 - And the gospel message of salvation through Jesus death on the cross needs to be proclaimed
 - Jesus tells his disciples ...
 - pray that God would raise up workers for the harvest field
 - pray that God would stir people's hearts to take this good news message of eternal life to the lost
 - pray that God would convict people there's a work of salvation that needs to be done if people are going to be brought from death to life
 - Because there's so many!
 - And so few are willing to go out and do the work of proclaiming life to a world that is perishing!
- And then after Jesus had finished the work of atoning for sin on the cross ... he commissioned his disciples to carry on that work
 - **Matthew 28:18-20** – *"... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ... "*
- This new work involves bringing people into fellowship with God through repentance and faith in Jesus
 - As Jesus says ... the harvest work we're called to is to go and make disciples of all nations and teach them everything Jesus commanded

¹ See also **John 4:34-38** – *"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶ Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷ Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. ³⁸ I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour."*

- That is ... we're to help people become disciples ... and then disciple those new disciples ... so they grow in maturity ... until they get to the point where they can go and make disciples
- Putting it another way ... we're to make disciple making disciples
- It's not that this new work of disciple making replaces our work of creation ... creation work is still important
 - But now there is a new dimension to work
 - Work is not just about
 - *"fulfilling our God given mandate to build communities where people care for each other"*
 - *"fulfilling our God given mandate to build communities that **love God** and where people care for each other"*
- Our work includes creation work and salvation work
 - Working in the various stations in life that God has placed us; AND
 - Working to see people become disciple making disciples of Jesus
- **Application**
- This means that while your creation work of teaching, accounting, designing, parenting, etc
 - is important and valued and
 - God wants you to do that as though you are serving him ...
- There's this new dimension of 'work' that the person who trusts in and follows Jesus is also called to
 - Just as creation work is part of our DNA as humans
 - So salvation work > being a disciple making disciples is part of our DNA as Christians

3. A Method for Mission Work

- It's one thing to know that we're called to be disciple making disciples ...
 - It's another thing to know how to go about it
- So Jesus shows us how to do this in the great commission in Matt 28
 - He says you make disciples by
 - Going, baptising, and teaching them all I commanded
- First is **Going**
 - Going out among our community
 - caring for them
 - building relationships

- connecting with them somehow
- reaching them
- That could be at work, school, street, community group
- And as you do ... you witness to Jesus in word and deed
- And as you do ... some will come to faith in Christ

- **Application**
- So that means being involved in the community is some way
 - Mingling with those who need to hear about Jesus
 - If you don't have that means of connecting ... first step is to work out how you can 'go' into the community
 - Volunteering at school, intentionally connecting with parents at kids sport, inviting neighbour over for BBQ

- Second thing is **Baptising**
 - When someone is baptised it's a sign that they have identified with Christ
 - They are nailing their colours to the mast
 - They're aligning themselves with death, resurrection of Jesus
- For that to happen of course ... they need to hear about Jesus
 - They need to know the amazing grace of the gospel
- How can we do that?
- That might involve
 - simply ... inviting people to church
 - sharing your faith with those at work who don't know Jesus
 - teaching children about Jesus and what it means to follow him
 - inviting a friend to do Christianity Explained with you
 - asking them if they would like to read the Bible with you > like Mark
 - talking about your faith with the barista who makes your coffee

- So that's something we can do with those we know
 - But there is something we can all do each and every Sunday ...
 - And that's helping people connect with one another here at church

- You see ... if part of making disciples is baptising them into Christ
 - Then part of that must include ... welcoming and connecting and helping people integrate into the body of Christ ... the church
- So say you bring a friend to church ... they like what they hear and experience and they come back
 - Then as a church what can we do?

- welcome them > look out for them > chat with them > introduce them to others > invite them over for lunch > invite them to our growth group
- Welcoming team are the start of that process as guests arrive on a Sunday
- But it's what the rest us do in the minutes and weeks afterwards that is just as important
- You know researchers say ... first time guests to church will make up their mind within 7 mins whether they want to come back
 - So they might have heard the good news of Jesus and be interested in finding out more ... but that's just the start
 - We need to be constantly seeking to welcome and connect people to the body of Christ
 - Why? So they can know Christ and the salvation he offers
- So helping people identify with Jesus by sharing the gospel and then welcoming and connecting them at church
- The third thing Jesus commanded is **Teaching** them everything I commanded
- This is helping people mature in their faith
- Every person is a different place in their walk with Jesus
 - Some are new to faith and others have been Christian for many years
 - Some are strong in their faith and sure of their salvation ... others have doubts and questions
 - Some are struggling with the complexity of family issues, marriage issues, work issues, financial issues ... and all of those things are real and impact on a person's faith
- However the goal is to help one another continue to mature in Christ with the goal of becoming a disciple making disciple
- What's that look like ...
 - Coming to church > obvious
 - Being part of a growth group > group of 12 or a group of 2
 - Having real conversations with one another > encouraging, challenging, supporting, rebuking
 - Meeting 1:1 to read Bible with that person who's new in their faith
- It means discipling our kids

- If you're a parent ... the raising your kids to be disciple making disciples starts with you at home
 - Reading the Bible with them
 - Conversations at dinner
 - Modelling the Christian life to them
 - Modelling to them a desire to make Jesus know to others
 - Encouraging them to come to youth group and invite their friends
- **Application**
- Some of you are probably thinking ...
 - "Man ... you're telling me I need to fulfill all my callings by being
 - a good worker
 - do the best job I can
 - serving others and the community
 - being a good parent and spouse
 - "And now you're saying ... I need to somehow add this other thing of disciple making into my week as well?"
- Of course there's a natural overlap between our creation work and our disciple making
 - As you go about your day job / our creation work ... whether it's paid or not ... there are opportunities to be disciple making too
 - Because in both creation and salvation work ... we're "fulfilling our God given mandate to in order to build communities that loves God and people care for each other"
- They shouldn't be separated
- So often we think of ourselves as a ...
 - Teacher ... doctor ... engineer ... sales rep ... graphic designer ... mum
 - But when we see a biblical view of work ... we should think of ourselves as
 - A disciple making disciple ...
 - Who is also a teacher ... doctor ... engineer ... sales rep ... graphic designer ... stay at home mum etc
- **Illustration – Head Hunter**
- I read a story about a head hunter that used to take great delight in testing high powered execs in interviews
 - He would make them feel all nice and comfortable ... nice easy questions, lull them into a false sense of security then all of sudden he'd lean across the table and say ...

- "So ... what's your goal and purpose in life"
- Idea was to see if he could throw them off their guard, see how comfortable they were under pressure etc
- One time he was interviewing a Christian man, the interview was taking its usual course and then out came the sledge hammer ... "what's your goal and purpose in life"
- To which this Christian executive replied ... quick as a flash
 - "to get to heaven and take as many people with me as possible"

- So here is a high powered exec ... big job ... big bucks ...
 - but he wants first and foremost to be a disciple making disciple
 - He knows creation work is important but as a Christian he has salvation work to do too
 - He understands a biblical understanding of work means to *build communities that loves God and people care for each other*"

- Let me give you some scenarios ...
- Dean is asked by his work colleague Pete how his weekend went and Dean responds that he heard a Bible talk on Sunday that helped him work through forgiving people who have wronged him over the years
 - When Pete raises his eyebrows and says, "that's interesting," Dean takes a small plunge and mentions that the key that helped him the most was the idea that, though he has not given God his due, God still forgives him through Jesus

- Dave comes to church with his wife, but he isn't sure what he believes or where he stands on Christianity
 - Stu - the pastor introduces him to another guy, Steve who begins meeting with Dave intermittently to read a book on basic Christianity and discuss it
 - After two meetings Dave agrees keep meeting to study the gospel of Mark each week over breakfast

- Emily begins coming to Growth Group
 - She was raised in the church, but she has so many doubts and questions that her group leader, Katie begins meeting with her one-on-one and looking at passages in the Bible that address each of her questions

- Steve is a tradie who loves to help others
 - He has an old neighbour Jack ... who's yard is overgrown

- So he organises some men from church to clean it up one day
- During the course of the day ... the guys are able to invite Jack along to church the next day

- Jenny prays for her playgroup friend Megan for months
 - One day during a play date Megan asks Jennie why she's a Christian
 - Jennie is able to tell Megan her testimony and then ask Megan what she thinks about Jesus
 - Jennie then plucks up the courage to ask Megan if she would be interested in doing Christianity Explored with her

- Jacqui is a young mum with two other Christian friends who are mums with young kids
 - They decide to start a daytime playgroup group and invite non-Christian friends who are also mothers
 - For about a year the group grows
 - They talk about marriage, parenting, personal issues and faith
 - As time goes on, several of the non-Christian mums begin to go to church

- So given we have this urgent call to share the gospel and make disciple making disciples ... it's worth stopping and asking questions like
 - Do I have a list of people I am praying for regularly that I want to share the gospel with?
 - What can I do to help welcome and connect people at church and to Jesus?
 - Can I devote a lunch time slot once a week to have lunch with someone to talk about Jesus or read the Bible with them
 - Would I be better off working half a day less a week and teaching school Scripture or helping with youth group?
 - Is it possible for me to retire early and devote part of my week to some form of gospel ministry?
 - Can I invite a friend over for a meal with some people from church?
 - How can I get involved in the local community in order to build connections and create opportunities to be a witness for Christ

4. A Motive for Mission Work

- What's going to motivate us to do this?
- If you're Christian ... you probably know this call to be a disciple making disciple

- But
 - the busyness of life and
 - the demands of our jobs and
 - the immediacy of our families
 - mean we often forget about the priority of our calling to be disciple making disciples

- What's going to help us to keep joyfully fulfilling our God given mandate to see people come to know and follow Jesus?
- I want to suggest two things

- The first is maintain the right perspective
- Investing / Superannuation
 - You know when you put money into your superannuation ... you're looking at a 20, 30, 40 investment horizon
 - So when markets dip as they do from time to time ... you don't jump in and switch all your money over to term deposits
 - You leave it ... because you know in the long run ... the market will recover and your super will grow
 - Your long term perspective helps guide how you prioritise your time and decisions

- And it's having an eternal perspective that will help us prioritise our time and decisions when it comes to our work
 - We all have creation work to do > our work (both paid and unpaid) is important and helps build communities that love and care for each other
 - But in the end ... our creation work won't last
 - Either someone will replace it, knock it down or supersede it > it's only temporary
- And because our work is ultimately temporary ... then as the writer of Ecclesiastes might say ... it's meaningless > a mist > it's all 'in vain'

- However friends ... there is work you can do that is not temporary and not in vain
- And that is making disciples of Jesus Christ
 - Because of the death and resurrection of Christ ... those who know Jesus have eternal life
 - Our work may be temporary ... but people can live for eternity

- So friends ...

- when we have an eternal perspective
- when we know that there's a work we can do that will have eternal significance ...
- Then we have a motive for mission work that spurs us on to do it
- Making disciple making disciples is never 'in vain'
- Which is why Paul says
 - 1 Corinthians 15:58 – "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."
- When you have the right perspective ... when you have eternity in mind ... it spurs you on to be a disciple making disciple

- The **second** thing that is going to help us joyfully fulfilling our God given mandate to see people come to know and follow Jesus ... is a **compassion of for the lost**
 - In Matthew 9:36 ... when Jesus saw the crowds ... we're told "*he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*"
 - Jesus has compassion
 - His heart breaks for the lost sheep of this world
 - So compassionate is he ... Jesus was willing to give up his life to save others
 - To rescue people out of darkness
- But not just other people ... but you and I as well
 - If you're a Christian person here today ... then that is only because Jesus Christ did the work of
 - coming to earth
 - going to the cross to pay for your sin
 - the sending people to you ... so you could hear and understand the wonderful news of the gospel
 - You are the beneficiary of his amazing grace and compassion

- To the extent you and I understand the extent of Jesus compassion for us ... then that will help you have compassion for others
- When you and I comprehend that Jesus came to us out of such love for the lost
 - Then we have the all the motive we need to carry on God's mandate to be disciple making disciples
- Not motivated by guilt
 - Not coerced by obligation

- But an eternal perspective that recognises its people who last forever
- The same compassion for the lost that Jesus showed you

PRAY