
The Purpose of Work

1. Intro – Work Songs

- 9 till 5 (Dolly Parton)
 - *Tumble outta bed and I stumble to the kitchen*
 - *Pour myself a cup of ambition*
 - *Yawn and stretch and try to come to life*
 - *Jump in the shower and the blood starts pumpin'*
 - *Out on the street the traffic starts jumpin'*
 - *With folks like me on the job from 9 to 5*

 - *Workin' 9 to 5, what a way to make a livin'*
 - *Barely gettin' by, it's all takin' and no givin'*
 - *They just use your mind and they never give you credit*
 - *It's enough to drive you crazy if you let it*
 - *9 to 5, for service and devotion*
 - *You would think that I would deserve a fat promotion*
 - *Want to move ahead but the boss won't seem to let me*
 - *I swear sometimes that man is out to get me!*
- For Dolly Parton ... work seems to have very little purpose
 - Working 9 to 5
 - All giving, not getting
 - Used by your boss
 - Lots of service and devotion
 - Deserves a promotion, wants to move ahead
 - But just not happening
- Work has very little purpose
- I wonder if you feel there is purpose in your work?
 - Or do you feel it's just a bit meaningless and hum-drum
 - Or you feel like you do all this work and it seems so insignificant
 - You think "If I didn't turn up tomorrow ... what difference would it make"
 - Or maybe you used to love your job and you used to find it meaningful and fulfilling ... but now you can feel your enthusiasm for the job waning ... and if the truth be told ... the quality is slipping with it
- Purpose in anything in life is important
 - Having a reason to do something ...

- makes the thing we do meaningful
- gives us reason to work hard, apply ourselves, get the job done
- When it comes to work ... if there is no purpose ... then work becomes meaningless
- This morning as we continue our series on work ... we're going to see what God has to say is the purpose of work
 - What's the point? What are we working for? What's our work meant to achieve? How can my work make a difference
 - All questions we will seek to answer as we go this morning

2. Working to Cultivate

- Last week as we looked at how God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1 & 2 ... we saw that God created man and woman in his image
 - And because God is a God who works to create and sustain his creation ... as people made in his image, that means ... part of being human ... means we are made to work > it's part of our DNA
 - It's not the only thing we are made to do > we're primarily made to be in relationship with God
 - But work is core to who we are as human beings
- And because God works and because we are made in his image ... there is therefore great dignity in work
 - Work is a good thing
- And so work is also how we serve God as we carry on the creation mandate God gave Adam and Eve in the garden
- The creation mandate is there in Gen 1:28
 - *"Be fruitful and increase in number; **fill the earth and subdue it**. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*
- Humanity is to fill the earth and subdue it
- **Fill the earth** = means humanity is to populate the earth
 - We're to build communities
 - God could have just spoken and filled the earth himself with millions of people and cities
 - But he didn't ... he made it our job to develop and build communities
- We're also to **subdue the earth**

- Subdue ... doesn't mean to violently exploit and plunder it for all its resources
- It means to make habitable > plant stuff > grow things
- God made the world in need of work ... that's why he put the man in the garden to work it
- So we see in Gen 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 had formed the earth and filled it ... but not completely
 - People are to carry on the work God started
- The world God has given us is there to be developed and enjoyed
 - It needs to be cultivated like a garden
- Tim Keller says in his book Every Good Endeavour
 - *"We are not to relate to the world like park rangers whose job is not to change the space but preserving the status quo. Nor are we to pave over the garden of the created world and make it into a parking lot. No we are to be gardeners who are to develop the garden"*
- We're meant to leave the garden as it is
 - We're to rearrange it, cultivate the soil, plant new things, tend it in order to make it beautiful and fruitful
- We're to be like gardeners growing and cultivating a culture and communities > we're meant to be culture makers
 - We're to build things, create things, develop things
 - We're to use the resources God has given us to develop and care for the world in a way that humanity can thrive and flourish

- This happens in all forms of work
 - Farmer takes the soil and produces food for others to eat
 - Musician takes notes and turns it into music for others to enjoy
 - Teacher takes a child and develops their knowledge and intellect
 - Builder takes wood and brick and turns it into a house for others to live in
- And as we do those things we are continuing God's work of forming, filling and subduing the earth
 - We are developing a culture
 - We're building communities

- When we have a biblical understanding of work that we're carrying on God's work for building communities and a culture ...

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- it helps us to get on with our work with a renewed sense of purpose, creativity and energy
 - Because through our work we
 - bring order to chaos
 - create new things
 - make advances for the good of the society
 - we supply the needs of others
 - Some work will be
 - Creative
 - Sustaining
 - Developing
 - Repairing
 - And rarely will our work be doing all things ...
 - That's because as a society we've compartmentalised our work so some can attend to one while others attend to the other
 - But with each enabling the other > so all help contribute to create conditions for caring communities
 - What this means is we're all dependent on the work of others
 - Without work ... society and communities would crumble
 - No schools, medical services
 - Without the work of the farmer, truck driver, baker and shelf packer ... we'd have no food in the supermarkets
 - Without work of others ... our own work would fail
 - We're totally dependent on others to do our work
 - Phone networks, computers, desk and chair
 - Cars, trains, petrol
 - Buildings, cleaners
 - The doctor depends on the engineer for equipment and a building so he can do his work ... just as the engineer depends on the doctor to stay healthy so he can do his work
 - So whether it's
 - Healing a patient
 - Preparing the accounts
 - Financing a project
 - Building a house
 - Supplying people with energy, telecommunications, clothes and food
 - Writing beautiful music
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- Cleaning the toilets
 - It all helps to develop, maintain, repair and enjoy the creation God has given us to cultivate
- And to the extent we understand this ... we can begin to see how our work ties in with and is joined to the work of God
 - Because our work is not just about me and what I get out of it
 - It's about building communities and a culture where humanity can continue to thrive and flourish
- How does our work connect to God's work?
 - Teacher educates next generation
 - Landscape architect makes beautiful gardens and parks
 - Cleaner and garbage collector staves off infection and disease
 - Athens > garbage strike > awful
 - Accountant organises sharing of resources
 - Volunteer helps run the local soccer club or fundraise through the school P&C
 - Stay at home mum helps raise the next generation of followers of Jesus
- And as we see the value and goodness in work that builds communities and a culture ... it helps us to not only see the goodness in work
 - But for the Christian it helps integrate their faith and their work
 - That is ... there is less of this secular and religious divide
 - Less of a separation between our faith on Sunday and our working life Monday to Friday
 - Christians can be more positive about work rather than feeling there's a great wedge that divide their work and Christian lives

3. Working to Serve and Love Others

- And so part of our purpose in work is to cultivate the garden God has put us in
 - To create, develop, build and harvest to build communities and a culture
- And in order to do that ... work needs to be for the sake of the community
 - We can't build an effective community and culture unless we do it in the love and service of others
- Andrew Cameron says in today's world there are three common reasons modern people give for why they work

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- First is fulfillment
 - I work to get a sense of worth and value
 - Whether it be success I have, the difference I make, money I earn
 - Second is reputation
 - I work to in order to feel significant or be recognised
 - Whether than be with my mates, peers, parents, industry
 - Third is consumption
 - I work because it gives me the money to consume the things I love
 - Food, alcohol, experiences, material possessions, holidays etc
 - All about what I get out of it

 - It isn't that work doesn't give us fulfillment, reputation and allow us to consume things ... but these are secondary purposes for work
 - But a biblical view of work means our primary purpose for work is much more bigger than that
 - God provides purpose for our work by **calling us** to serve him and serve the community
 - God's calling us in our work is worth exploring

 - Back in the middle ages the Catholic church created this sacred / secular divide
 - To be 'called' to the priesthood was one of the sacraments of the Catholic church > it gave you extra grace with God
 - But the Protestant reformers like Luther challenged this
 - They said **all** Christians are called by God and the work of **all** people is valuable in the economy of God ... not just the ministry of priests or paid gospel workers

 - In the centuries that followed ... the idea of **calling** or **vocation** has become secularised ... and has come to be associated with our occupation or employment
 - Now we think of our vocation in terms of a career in accounting > teaching > IT etc
 - Many people see their job as their calling
 - Ministry > teaching > medicine > motherhood etc

 - But this is not a biblical view of vocation or calling
 - The Bible talks about our calling in two ways

 - The first is our calling to Christ
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- **Ephesians 4:1** *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received*
 - This is the gospel call
 - This is the way God works for you and I to hear the truth about Jesus and respond in repentance and faith
 - All people are called to Christ and to repent and believe in him
 - Not all do ... but all need to
 - From the Bible's perspective ... this is the most important calling we have

 - The second way the Bible talks about calling ... is the various spheres or stations in life that God has called us to
 - 1 Cor 7 Paul is speaking to the Corinthians about their circumstances of life and says ... whether you're married, single, slave or free ... remain in the position God has **called** you to and continue serving the Lord
 - **1 Corinthians 7:17** *each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him.*
 - So not only are we called to hear the gospel and put our trust in Jesus ...
 - But God also calls us to various positions in life were we do our work

 - **Application**
 - What does this mean
 - Firstly ... if you are called to something ... you're **called in the service** of another party
 - Ultimately that's the Lord
 - But it's also to the service others
 - This service of others is true even if you're not a Christian
 - Our work is done for the good of those around us
 - Family, community, customers, patients, clients, students

 - What this means is our work is not about us
 - Real work (paid / unpaid) is not about us
 - It's not about fulfillment, reputation or consumption
 - It's for the love and service of others

 - And so the question about what work shall I do therefore is not
 - "How much money can I make?"
 - "What will give me the most status?"
 - But how can I serve others and the community best with the gifts God has given me
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- **Example – Mike Baird**
 - England > through friends got to know Mike and Kerryn Baird
 - Mike was working in banking with NAB
 - Went away for Christmas > got talking
- Mike's story
 - Christian family > Dad = Bruce Baird > federal member in politics > led Sydney 2000 Olympic bid
 - Mike started off in banking > went to Regent College Vancouver to study theology and prepare for what he thought would be a career as Christian minister
 - While he was at Regent College he wrote a paper on what brought him to this point and how he thought he would serve God from that day forward.
 - In the paper he said I look forward to serving as a church minister
 - And the man who marked the paper put in ink underneath it, "or in Australian politics"
 - He said it was at that point realised that work for him would be in politics > serving the community > building and developing a culture in NSW¹
- Because work is not all about us > it's about serving the community
 - Mike could have chosen to stay in investment banking, earned a huge salary > avoided the scrutiny and criticism of politics > but it would have all been for himself
- That's the first thing ... the work we are called to is for the love and service of others
- Second thing about our calling for work ... is that you and I **have multiple callings**
 - Your paid job is not your only calling in life that God has given you
 - May be a teacher ... but you may also be a mother, aunt, daughter, school parent
 - May be an accountant ... but you may also be a father, son, coach, church elder
 - Maybe a nurse ... but you may also be a mentor, a friend, a P&C rep
 - And in each of those stations in life that God has called you to ... you're loving and serving different groups of people

¹ <http://hope1032.com.au/stories/culture/quests-and-artists/2015/faith-family-the-softer-side-of-mike-baird/>

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- Children, customers, family members, school community, sporting community, church community
 - The fact that we have multiple callings or stations in life in which we work ... helps guard us from allowing our paid employment to consume us
 - If God has called you and I to different vocations
 - Then that means we cannot allow our paid jobs to take up so much of our time that we neglect our other callings
 - I'm not free to say my paid work is my only 'calling' and that means I don't have time to
 - Be a loving and supportive spouse
 - Be involved as dad with my kids
 - Be an active member of the body at church
 - Particularly relevant to dads
 - If God has called you to be a dad ... you have one of the most important jobs in the world
 - You not only have kids you need to protect and provide for ... but you also have kids you need to disciple to know and love Jesus
 - The father's role is key in this
 - Research shows that approx 80% of kids will give up on their faith by the time they leave school
 - But the research also shows that when dads are open, honest, active as Christians and engaged with their kids about the Christian life ... your kids have an 80% better chance of them continuing to follow Jesus
 - You see men ... we need fulfill our calling as fathers ...
 - Men who are active in the church > proactive in teaching our kids about Jesus > modeling what its like to follow Jesus
 - And you can't do that if you are allowing your job to completely dominate your life
 - We have multiple callings friends
 - God wants us to work at each of them and not let our job get in the way of the all various forms of work he has given us to do
 - We're to serve him in **all** the circumstances he has placed us
 - **Competence**
 - If we're called in our work to love and serve others in our community ... then you ought to do you work as well as you can
 - That is ... you ought do a good job > do the best you can
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- Dorothy Sayers > English writer early C20th
 - “The Church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to get drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours and to come to church on Sundays. What the church should be telling him is this – that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables”

 - Martin Luther
 - “The Christian shoemaker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes”

 - Loving and serving the community well means
 - A doctor knows how to diagnose and treat a patient’s condition
 - An aircraft engineer builds an engine so that it doesn’t fail during flight
 - A chef knows the importance of food hygiene protocols
 - A tax advisor knows what’s deductible this year and what isn’t
 - A barista knows how not burn the milk

 - One of the best way you and I can love and serve God and love and serve others ... is to do our work to the best of our ability

 - **Application**
 - As we begin to see the purpose in our work ... then we begin to see the connection between our faith and our work
 - When we see that our work plays a part in God’s plan for the cultivation and service of society then we see how our work fits into a picture that’s bigger than us and more significant than us
 - When we understand this ... we begin to feel there’s less of a spiritual / secular divide to our week
 - All of sudden ... Sundays become more connected to our working week
 - Life is less dualistic ... Christian on Sunday > worker on Monday

 - When we grasp this ...
 - It means all work ... not just the so-called helping professions ... are fundamentally ways of helping your neighbour
 - You don’t have to be doing Christian ministry or non-for-profit charity work in order to love and serve the community through your work
 - This means we can find satisfaction in our work even if by the worlds standards our jobs are not very exciting, high paying or well regarded

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- Your work will begin to feel more fulfilling because you can see and understand your work as a calling to love your neighbour and your community

 - **Model of Service and Love**
 - And so we need to have this clear purpose in our work
 - We need to know that we're working for something bigger than ourselves

 - **Illustration – Broughton Knox**
 - Before he became Principal of Moore College, Broughton Knox served as a chaplain in the British Navy in WWII
 - He happened to be on a ship preparing for D-Day, the invasion of Normandy
 - He noted that the minds of all hands on board, regardless of rank, were focused on the invasions success
 - No one thought of his own interests, but only how he could help his shipmates in their commonly shared task
 - He says *"I remember noting in my mind how I had never been happier"*

 - After the invasion and return to England, everyone noticed a difference in the atmosphere on the ship
 - It was still friendly and well run ship
 - But several of the sailors, sensing the difference asked the young chaplain why things had changed
 - Knox reflected
 - *"The answer was quite simple. During those months that proceeded and followed D-Day, out thoughts had a minimum of self-centredness in them*
 - *We gave ourselves to our shared activity and objective ... once the undertaking was over, we reverted to our own purposes, as we do normally"*
 - Like the men on that naval ship ... when it comes to our work ... we need to know that our work has a bigger purpose
 - We need to know our work is an extension of God's work as we help to cultivate a community that we can love and serve in our various callings
 - Otherwise work becomes meaningless and self-centered
 - Otherwise work becomes all about
 - Finding fulfilment
 - Building a reputation
 - Getting the things I want
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- How do we guard ourselves falling back into that mindset where our purpose for work is all about the meaningless pursuit of fulfilment, reputation and consumption
- How do we keep going in our work so that were seeking to love and serve our community with our various callings?

- We remember the one who came to love and serve us
 - Mark 10:45 – *the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many*
- We remember the one who's calling was to go to the cross so we could be part of a community
 - Not just a community here in Peakhurst ... but a community in heaven forever
- We remember the one who came not so that he could be fulfilled ... but so that we could be fulfilled and have eternal life
 - The one who came not to enhance his own reputation ... but to enhance the reputation of his Father
 - The one who came not to get what he wanted ... but to give us what we need
 - Relationship with God, forgiveness of sin, a share in God's eternal rest
- And when you look the Jesus Christ and see the one who's calling was to come to love and serve you on the cross
- To the extent you've received that and rejoice in that ...
 - Then in frees you to work in your callings to love and serve others and your community

PRAY