

## Work As It Will Be

series: *Faith and Work*

Isaiah 11:6-10, Isaiah 65:21-25, Revelation 22:1-5

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Randy Lovelace

[The offertory was “I Can Only Imagine.”] And indeed we are called to be guided by the Holy Spirit, the promise and the beauty of God's Word, that our imagination would be ignited for what the Lord is doing and what he is going to do.

And so we gather together this morning as we finish in this series on *Faith and Work*. We spent the last several weeks looking at the issue of how our faith and the work that we do come together. And we've looked at it from the lens of the four chapters of the work of God, of the Gospel itself from Genesis to Revelation. That is, at creation, because of the fall, because of redemption, and what awaits in the restoration. Said in more everyday language, it is we looked at faith and work as it was meant to be, as it ought to be, (because of creation), as it is and how we experience that because of the fall and the brokenness that it brings and the challenge that that brings to our work, but also because of the redemption of Christ, what work can be, aided by his Spirit and Grace. And we look today at what work will be at the restoration of all things. Ought, Is, Can, Will as faith and work come together

As we finish today, my very last thing I will say, I'm going to be bringing together all that we've talked about and why we're not just waiting for that day and there's not much else that we can do. Rather, what the Lord intends for us to do, because of the work of Christ and the Gospel. But then next week we will begin a new series on the *Gospel of Mark*, and that will take us through this spring as we prepare for Easter Sunday morning and then on into the beginning of the summer.

So what I'm going to do this morning is I'm going to open us in prayer, and then I'm going to look at these three points that you have in front of you and what work will be. **The Curse Removed, [Fruitful] Work, Bountiful Worship**. So I'm going. . .What I'm going to do, as I get to each point I may be looking at the specific verses as they relate to these. The reason for this is because what work will look like when the Lord comes and restores all things is sort of spread out in Scripture. It's not just one place. We're going to be looking at two places specifically in the prophet Isaiah, and then we're going to be finishing in Revelation 21 and 22. Let's go before the Lord now, asking that he would indeed ignite our imagination by His Spirit and His Word of what work will be. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you this morning for your Word. May you instruct us. May you encourage us. May you stir our hearts and our imagination by your Word and Spirit together that we might find joy in the Lord this day and as this week begins. Do this, we ask. And may we know your presence, and may your presence encourage us, strengthen us, and give us a vision for what you are doing in our midst. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**The Curse Removed.** This is the promise of what will happen when the Lord returns and restores all things. Isaiah writes about this. And he writes about it first in Isaiah Chapter 11. Here Isaiah is prophesying about what the shoot of Jesse, the one who will come from Jesse, the branch from his roots. This is looking forward to the promised Messiah, that is, the Lord

Jesus Christ. And He speaks of him and what he will bring with him. Listen to what he will bring in his hands and by his righteousness. Isaiah Chapter 11, beginning at verse 6.

<sup>6</sup>The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
and a [little] child shall lead them.

<sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

<sup>8</sup>The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

<sup>9</sup>They shall not hurt or destroy  
in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.

<sup>10</sup>In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of  
him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. [ESV]

What he is pointing to, guided by the Holy Spirit, prophesying and speaking through Isaiah to the nation of Israel, and by extension to us who have received the new covenant in the Word. As Jesus revealed to his disciples how the prophets were preaching and pointing to him, we can see what our future holds. It is that the curse—which we looked at several weeks ago, the curse that is brought about because of sin, man's rebellion, our rebellion against having God as Father, as the Lord of our lives—the curse because of sin has been brought. And what it did is it brought brokenness relationally, horizontally. It brought first and foremost brokenness in relationship vertically with our Heavenly Father. It also brought brokenness creationally in our relationship with the very creation around us.

But when this branch, this shoot of Jesse, comes forth again in righteousness, what he will bring with him in restoration, first and foremost, is the removal of the curse. That means what will be restored is our relationships horizontally, because it has been made right vertically. He writes of this just a few verses earlier when he says, speaking of Christ.

<sup>2</sup>And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. [Isaiah 11:2-3a, ESV]

That because this is true of Christ, the one who goes before us, because of him, because of his leading, he will be the one that will bring about this peace. That peace, that *shalom*, literally means flourishing, well-being. So this *shalom* that the Lord will bring is first and foremost in our relationship with the Father through Christ, receiving this same Spirit that led Christ. We receive the Spirit, and thereby our relationships together will be completely restored.

But then creationally—what a beautiful picture. Now I'm not one for reptiles. Some of you are. (Jack, wherever you are. He tries to give us an appreciation for reptiles.) But imagine that one of the most poisonous and most violent of all snakes will not be a threat to the youngest of children. That is less about being literal, but more about stirring our imagination about what

the restoration and the removal of the curse actually means for us and our relationship with the creation. That it will be so peaceful, so full of the Lord's glory that a child can lead farm animals, that they can play in a field and not be worried about threat or harm. That indeed, there will not be anything that will destroy on the Lord's holy mountain. And the earth—this is beautiful—the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. Everyone will know—not just mentally, but our whole bodies will know that he is the Lord and he fills the whole place. The curse is removed. And in that context—of relationship, the curse removed—it's there that the Lord turns, through the prophet Isaiah just a little bit later, to talk about what impact that will have on our work.

In Isaiah, as we turn now to look at **Fruitful Work**, you see we can look at Isaiah Chapter 65. You'll notice similar language to what he used in Isaiah 11. Isaiah 65:21-25. He says these words, speaking of the people of God.

<sup>21</sup> They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.  
<sup>22</sup> 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.  
<sup>23</sup> 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.  
<sup>24</sup> Before they call I will answer;  
while they are yet speaking I will hear.  
<sup>25</sup> The wolf and the lamb shall graze together;  
the lion shall eat straw like the ox,  
and dust shall be the serpent's food.  
They shall not hurt or destroy  
in all my holy mountain," says the Lord. [ESV]

What is being established there is that fruitful work, as it was meant to be, as it was experienced in the Garden prior to the fall—as it says, “as in the days of a tree.” Looking backwards we see the restoration of fruitful work. As we've been looking at together over these last several weeks, we often feel the tension between what we feel called to do, what we want to do, and then the work we have to do. And we live in that tension. There are days where our work feels fulfilling and igniting, and other days it feels like a drag. And it is challenging. It is frustrating. And we all experience it in various ways.

And we try to build something, we want something that will last, only not to be seen ~~from~~ a couple of years hence. Someone else takes it over, someone shuts down a budget, and it's not seen again. Or you've invested all of your time. There seemed to be a response, but then as time goes on people do not follow, they do not hear. Our children seem to be with us for a time, but then they walk away from what we've taught them. We gave them wisdom and they seemed to get it. Even though we've invested in them, there's no guarantee that it will last. At times our work seems fruitless.

But the Gospel keeps us from being caught in the way work is and what our calling is now and

how we experience it. What the Gospel points us to is that in that day what will happen is fruitful work will be restored. Which means that in the new heavens and the new earth, by this world's standards, we will be engaged in extremely hard work, except it will not seem hard. It will be full of joy, it will be full of purpose. And what is built will last, what is planted will yield fruit, and we will enjoy of its plenty forever. And it will not come at the cost of blood, sweat, or tears. We will not be invaded. We will not be destroyed. The Lord promises that when all things are restored, because we were created for work with our hands, with our mouths, with our minds, with our hearts—all of those things will be made new. Amen?

This, I ask you to imagine—guided by the Spirit and this Word—I call you to imagine the work that you are now doing. . . And as Luther said, if you are sweeping a floor in your work you need to know that because of the Gospel that work that you do has as much dignity before the Lord as what I am doing now in delivering God's word to you. That regardless of what you do it has dignity, because the Lord has made you and he's given that work for you to do. But the promise is all things will be made new. Now imagine the work that you do being fully restored, having joy in it, being able to sing while you do it. Now that is an imagination I want to invest myself in!

But not only do we see the curse removed, not only do we see fruitful work restored, it is all within the context of **Bountiful Worship**. We see this in Revelation 22:1-5. It says:

<sup>1</sup>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 <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>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. [ESV]

Notice there are several things in those verses which are there for us to pick up on. First, trees will always bear fruit. This is the best time of year to be in Florida because of grapefruit. But if you live in Florida, it's like everybody wants to give you grapefruit. There's more than enough. The lemons are so big they look like grapefruit until you try to bite into one because you haven't been living in Florida very long and you realize oh, wait a second, that's not a grapefruit. But having lived in a place where there is wonderful fruit, imagine that every month there will be new fruit, on and on and on and on. That fruit will need to be gathered together and given and celebrated. There is a city that will be a place where people gather together. We will be servants. There will be reigning.

But more than that. Listen to what it says just prior. It says:

<sup>22</sup>And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup>And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup>By its light will the nations walk (there will be nations) and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it (meaning they will bring all that their work and their planning has been doing, they will bring it to the Lord in the great city.) <sup>25</sup>and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup>They (speaking of all those who will stream in to it) will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup>But

nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

So what's just been spoken of in Isaiah 65 comes into fruition as we see it is this vision of the new heavens and the new earth as John saw it, aided by the Holy Spirit. What we recognize is this. That all of that work—the planting of vineyards, the building of houses, the gathering together for the worship of the Lord around the restored and renewed earth—all that bounty will be brought to what? To the worship of the Lord. No longer do we find purpose in work because it merely feeds me, or I don't merely find my identity in the work because it makes me feel I am important. Rather the whole purpose of the work is to recognize the one who gives it, and he is the one to whom we give all things. Therefore all of us who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior are given the promise that in a new heavens and the new earth the curse is removed, work is restored, and all in the context of giving worship and praise to the Lord who is in our midst. There will be no night, there will be no sun, for the glory of the Lord will fill it. And our work will have its ultimate source and purpose to glorify the name of our Heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glorious Holy Spirit. This is what we were built for. This is what is to come.

But how, then, do we fit into all of this context the work the way it was meant to be, but because of the fall we don't experience this kind of joy or often this kind of purpose, but we feel the brokenness and the tension and the frustration. And given by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ we can seek to live out in the way in which we do our work, in the way that we treat others, in the way that we treat our customers, in the way that we care for our neighbors. This is the way in which the work can be. It can be used of the Lord today to bring about the good for others. Because we looked at the end of last week how our work, because of the Gospel, is bidirectional. It is not only to bring glory to the Lord, but it is also to bless others. We looked at several examples. But we still await that day when all of this will be realized in far more glory than it's even expressed here. This is just the best way we could understand it. It will be far greater.

So what do we do between now and then? Do we merely wait? But here is the beauty of why we're not just called to wait or to just hope that one day in the by and by the Lord will come and make all things right. No, it will be an embodied experience. We will have bodies fully restored. We will have work given to us. But here is the beauty of the Gospel. It is not purely a wait and see—the Gospel—because Christ Jesus and his work means this. We don't wait for the future. No, the future has come in to the present. That because God has entered into time and space through his Son, as the shoot of Jesse, the promise that was made ultimately to Abraham, all the way back to Genesis 3:15—because he has come into the world, his advent and incarnation as the God-man—fully God, yet fully man, yet one person—because of his life, his righteousness, his obedience, because of his work, because of his sacrifice on the cross for our sin, and because of his victory over death and sin and the resurrection—means that the Kingdom of God is not yet to come. It has already begun.

Which means the work that we do, the attitudes which we go into our work, the way we treat and love our coworkers, the way we treat and care for those who are over us as managers or bosses, as we care for those who we watch over, whether they be children or those who report to us in our work—that regardless of what we do, we can take the fruit of the Holy Spirit by the work of God. . . And when we prayerfully infuse our work with those things, that means the Lord is bringing about the restoration through us, through the hands and feet of those who

trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our work does not have to be in vain. It does not mean that we white knuckle our way into the restoration of all things. Rather what we do and how we do it—unto the name of the Lord—can be part of what he's doing in restoring injustice, caring for those who have need, infusing our work because he's designed it for us with a sense that it is for worship that we do the work. That he ultimately is our boss. That when we speak of those around us we imagine that the Lord Jesus is right there. And as we do unto others, we do unto him.

Imagine for just a minute if the people of God were to be infused with this imagination of what the Holy Spirit promises here through these writers. If we prayed, Holy Spirit, what would it look like this week for me to be infused with this Gospel vision of what the restored earth will look like. That you might give to me a tamed tongue, that in my speech I might bless others, that in my work and my attitude I might honor others, that in the bounty that you give through my work that I might seek to bless others. What would the Lord want to do? That is up to him.

But I know this. He's already told us. He says that if we turn to him. . . Back in Isaiah 58. . . I read this earlier this morning during our vision discussion. In Isaiah 58 he says these words. Speaking of those who choose to honor the Lord in what they do, prayerfully, guided by the Holy Spirit, given by His grace, he says:

<sup>8</sup>Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up speedily;  
your righteousness shall go before you;  
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.  
<sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'  
If you take away the yoke from your midst,  
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

What he's saying there is if you put away the ways in which the world goes about its work, pointing fingers, only trying to often gain for ourselves. If we put those things away, he says:

<sup>10</sup>if you pour yourself out for the hungry  
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
then shall your light rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be as the noonday.  
<sup>11</sup>And the Lord will guide you continually  
and satisfy your desire in scorched places

Even though it might be difficult circumstances, he promises that if we turn to him, he will bless us, even in scorched places. Hallelujah! Amen? I need this. Do you? It gets better. He says he will

satisfy your desire in scorched places  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters do not fail.  
<sup>12</sup>And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;

you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to dwell in. [Isaiah 58:8-12, ESV]

How does the Lord want to bring restoration? Through you, not in spite of you. He wants you and me to be the hands and feet of Christ in our work, for His glory, that he might bring—Lord, we pray, come, Lord Jesus, and restore all things. Remove the curse. Renew our work in the context of bountiful worship. And we will pray that. But Lord, until you do, use crooked sticks like us that our faith and our work would be more closely intertwined, that you might receive all the glory. Amen? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we now ask that you would do this. That you would empower us by your Holy Spirit, give us a vision for what it means to look to you even this week. That the fruit of the Spirit would be evident in our work and how we do it. That we might worship you and bless others. That you might satisfy us and give us living water. That even though we might be experiencing challenge and difficulty, that we would know the joy of the Lord because you provided for us even in scorched places. Enabled by your grace, may we be a radically loved people that seek to be restorers, closing the breach, rebuilding for the glory of the Lord and His return. Help us, Lord. Infuse us with biblically molded imaginations, and give us the fire of heaven, the Holy Spirit, to walk in faithfulness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.