

Work As It Ought to Be

series: Work and Faith

Genesis 1:24-2:3

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We turn this morning to this first Sunday in a series for the month of January, as we look at faith and work and its relationship with one another and how we are to go about living out our faith as those who are also called to work. Then after we are finished with this brief series, we will begin a fuller series in the Gospel of Mark.

And so we begin this Sunday and looking at “Work As It Ought to Be.” And what better place—the only place—to turn is Genesis, the first chapter. We're looking this morning at Genesis 1:24-2:3 as we look at the relationship between faith and work. Hear now God's Word.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ 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.” ²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ 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. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.) Pray with me. Heavenly Father, we now ask that you would enable us to see the relationship between walking with you by faith and doing the work that we are called to do. Lord, help us to understand it as you have designed it, but

help us to also understand it, because it is broken due to the fall, and how and in what ways you intend that work be redeemed, and that we find your design in it. So help us, we pray, to connect Sunday to Monday. Help the teacher. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So in this outline you'll see as we look at this text, and we're going to look at two other verses which we've read earlier in the service from Chapter 2. We're going to see how and in what ways work is **Created**, how work was **Commissioned**, and work has **Fallen**. And so work **Created, Commissioned, Fallen**.

First, how work was **Created**, if you will. So what we see in these early verses of Chapter 1—it would be fitting to read the entirety of Chapter 1, but we would not have enough time, so I read a portion of it that led us to the creation of the first man and woman. And what we see there is in God's creative activity that work itself is first and foremost intrinsic to being. That is to say, what we see when we hear in the words of verse 24 that God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds, livestock and creeping things," and then in verse 25 where God says, "And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds." We see first and foremost that intrinsic to Divine Being is work itself. That God Himself in His Divine Being is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—all three, we learn, through the totality of Scripture, were present at the Creation. The Spirit hovering above the waters. Colossians declaring that through Christ, the Word, all things came into being that are. That God's will was done through the work of Christ. What we see is that the very nature of the Divine Being in the Trinitarian essence of who God is, is bound up in doing work.

And that is as work as it ought to be. That work is not separate from whom I am as a human being or something that I have to do, because it wasn't so for God. It wasn't as though God was just sort of hovering about the heavens and, you know, just sort of drinking mint juleps in his Divine Being, looking for something to do, when he just woke up one day and decided well, you know, it'll be a really good thing: I'll create. No, God has always been upholding, because he is eternal in nature, God was upholding and providing all that is, even before it was. Because he is the Divine God, intrinsic to who he is, is work.

But we also see in these chapters, in these verses, not just that God made, we also see the second part of it, being the work that is created—not just that it was intrinsic to his being, it was incredibly varied. Notice in these opening verses we hear things like making and designing. Notice it goes to great lengths to repeat. And I must tell you it is Hebrew poetry that is used here. Were we to see it in its original form, it was all Hebrew poetry, the first two chapters of Genesis. And so what you hear is a repetition of words, not because the author Moses ran out of words to use, it's because he's using a literary device.

And so what we learn here over and over again: each to its kind. Seed of its kind, of every kind of fruit, every plant, every beast, according to its kind. So what we hear is that God made, God designed, God used and is, indeed, the source of all creativity. It isn't just that God made a bunch of widgets that look like one another. We see the differences and distinguishes between different kinds of trees, different kinds of grasses, different kinds of fruit. All of this is not just an expression that God made, it is an expression of his very creativity.

He also builds, when we recognize when he says, "And God saw everything he had made, and

behold, it was very good. There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” We hear the expression of night and day. There was the building of the cosmos and of all of the hosts of stars. And each one had its own function: the sun to light the day, the moon to govern the night. Each one had its function and has its function. We can say the same thing about seeds as they fall to the ground. They have their function of then producing more of its own kind. We have the function and the cycles of seasons. We hear what's happening in California. They call it an atmospheric river, as a storm is bringing moisture all the way from the Hawaiian Islands all the way to the coast of California. And this atmospheric river, as it is called, is somewhat about a mile off the surface of the ocean gathering great amounts of water and then dumping it on the ground. This is the cycles of which God has put in motion, because that is the function for which he designed it, created, and used his creativity in doing it.

But in all of these things we also recognize that intrinsic to God's work is not just the very means by way in which he does his work of making, creating, designing, building, and all of their functions, it is also that which we cannot see, but only the fruit of this kind of work. And that is God caring for what he is made, upholding it by his provision of water and land, of fruit and seed. That it has a purpose, that purpose being an expression of his Divine Being. Not that the created order contains a divine being in it, but rather it reflects who God is. Its purpose is to reflect the beauty and the glory of the Creator.

And it is this which is often lost. That in God creating these things—of animals and seed, moon and sun, water and ground—is that God not only expresses his creativity and his intrinsic design for work in creating it, he actually intends for one part of the creation to serve another part of the creation, and vice versa. When he does this he provides water for Adam and Eve. He provides fruit for his creation. Thereby, when he calls Adam and Eve to do the work of having dominion and overseeing it and cultivating it, it's for the purpose that Adam and Eve were to serve the other parts of creation by showing and having dominion as a reflection for God. So God has created it so that it might serve other parts of the creation. This is a part of God's design—not just creation, but creation serving creation as an expression of the Godhead.

That the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—love one another as a relationship to one another as one God, yet three persons, serving, glorying one another. And God's creating and Adam and Eve's existence in it was to be one as an expression of union and relationship. Adam serving Eve, Eve serving Adam, and enjoying of creation and having dominion and working it, in serving it, that it might serve the other—for the whole purpose of giving God glory through this work. Because work was created because it is intrinsically a part of who God is. These few short verses demonstrate the beauty and union that work was meant to have for God Himself.

And then this second part: Not just that work was created, work was **Commissioned**, that work was to be a delight for us as human beings. Notice this when he gives instruction to Adam and Eve, verse 27. “So God created man in his own image, in the in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them. 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 creature that moves on the earth.’” Just as God is love, the expression of the Trinity is an expression of what love looks like. The love of the Father for the Son and for the Spirit, and the love of the Son for the Father and all the way

around—it is an expression of divine love. And when God loves, we see the fruit of that love is that God expands the circle of who he is. That is, he creates man in his image. That love produces fruit.

So, likewise, the first commandment that he gives to Adam and Eve, a fruit of what it means to be a human being, is to expand the circle of what it means to love—to have children and families. But more than that, that the fruit of that love is also the work of caring and provision, overseeing and having dominion—dominion being demonstrably different than dominion and control. Dominion here is one of management and oversight. All of it, though, infused with love, not abuse. Love recognizing that that which we have dominion over has the greatest purpose of reflecting who God's glory is. Not dominion so that I can simply extract and consume.

And so God created man and woman and gave them and commissioned them to do work as a reflection of who God is, as we've just looked at. And they were to be used by God to bless and uphold and provide for a creation. As God says, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the earth and all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food." Well, when they eat it for food is the process of picking fruit, and when you pick fruit, more fruit will grow. It is meant to provide for Adam and Eve, but also Adam and Eve providing and working and having dominion in creation.

We hear this as well in Genesis 2:15 when he says these words: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden to work it and to take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.' The Lord said, 'It is not good for man to be alone, and I will make him a helper.'" And so he formed Eve from Adam. And he gave them the call to work the garden, to work the creation. And so we see that they were to do so because of their reflecting of the divine nature of who God is and his work.

But more than that, what we learn from these opening verses of Genesis is not just that there was to do work as a reflection of who God is, there was also meant to have a rhythm to it. As wonderful as the work is, as it ought to be prior to the fall, there was a rhythm to work. We hear it when we hear these words of verse 31 of Chapter 1. "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. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 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. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." Aah. As with God, so with Adam and Eve and us. That not only is it a reflection of God's work, our work is also meant to lead to the rhythm of rest. Six days you shall work; on the seventh you shall rest.

And let me explain it this way. What we see here in these early verses prior to the fall, we see something that God always intended to be together. Vocation—which is from an old word, *vocare*, which means calling, which has intrinsically a part of it this idea of purpose, what you feel drawn to as a purpose in life—and occupation. Occupation is ~~what~~ the work that you actually do. Vocation, your calling, and your occupation were meant to be one and the same. That is, your calling and what you've been designed to do finds its greatest purpose and application in the actual doing of it, in your occupation. So what we see here in Chapter 1 and

Chapter 2 of Genesis, is we see that in God—who he is and his calling and his purpose—is bound up in the occupation of doing work, so was the same with Adam and Eve.

But it was not always to be just work. God actually built into the creation, as a reflection of who he is, that on the seventh day you are to rest from your vocation-occupation to enjoy leisure in the best sense of that word. And here's the word I want to recover. And I'm grateful for the wonderful work of the German Catholic philosopher, Josef Pieper, when he says this. He argues that leisure is not the mere absence of work, but an attitude of mind or soul in which you are able to contemplate and enjoy things as they are in themselves, without regard to their value or their immediate utility. Said another way. Leisure, he says, is the condition of considering things in a celebrating spirit. Leisure lives on affirmation. Do you hear that? Leisure lives on affirmation. It is not the same as the absence of activity. It is rather the stillness in the conversation of lovers, which is fed by their oneness. As it is written in the Scriptures, God saw when he rested from all his works that he made, that everything was good, very good. Chapter 1, verse 31. Just so, that leisure of man includes within itself a celebratory, approving, lingering gaze of the inner eye on the reality of creation.

So the seventh day, when we rest on the Lord's Day, it is not just the absence of activity. It is to have within it that celebratory element that we hear when God rested from his six days of work and he looked at all that he had created and he said very good. And our day of rest and worshiping of the Lord ought to include in it the leisure of celebrating. Lord, thank you for the work that I've completed this week. Yes, there is more work to be done. There will always be more work to be done. But if this was what it looked like as it was meant to be so of the more now.

And so students, those ones who are standing up here, how much homework did you save for today so that you can get it done prior to tomorrow? (No, Caroline, I'm not just talking to you, I promise. And many parents right now are going, Yay!) So understand what I mean. This is not don't do this, you gotta do this. I'm not suggesting that you should never do homework on Sunday, or that you as adults who have jobs that you should never work on Sunday. This is not about a commandment to 'not do.' But here's my point. If we have no space in our week where we are resting from our vocation-occupation, where we were able to look back and to celebrate 'That is finished. Thank you, Lord,' then we're missing the intrinsic rhythm that God has set for us in our very souls and our very being, physically and spiritually. So it's not something we have to do. It's something we get to do. So you finish as much of the work as you completely do on the six days, so that when you take the rest on the Sabbath you're able to actually celebrate and enjoy nap and rest, eat and drink, worship and give thanks for the work that you've gotten done. That is what it was designed to be. There was to be a rhythm. Why? Because work, as Dr. Timothy Keller says, work always had its limits, even prior to the fall. We were not built for work. Work is a part of who we are. We were built for worship. And our work was to be an expression of our celebratory worship of the Lord who has provided.

But. You knew that was coming. This is not the way we experience work. "Thank God it's Friday." Or oh, no, it's Monday. Particularly as we ended the celebration of Christmas and New Year's and then we had to face the work the very next day. Yes, I know it was a federal holiday—that's a different problem, that's not what I want to get into, but you get the idea. That Tuesday came this week. Were you ready? Let me ask you another question. How many

of you—of course, rhetorically, you don't have to answer this out loud—how many of you would be able to say that it is true that your vocation is the same as your occupation. For many of us who sit in this room each week we often feel that our occupation—what we do Monday through Friday, and some Monday through Saturday and even Sundays—is often at war against the thing you feel called to do.

And this is what we have to look at in regard to. . . Yes, God created these things with its intrinsic nature, the very nature of work, the intrinsic being to God, who he is in his divine nature, the reflection of that divine nature and calling us to work in our commissioning to it, and the rhythm of it. We run headlong into Chapter 3 of Genesis. That for Adam and Eve it was not enough to have God as God. They wanted to be like God. And in disobeying the Lord, it isn't just that their souls were fallen and the relationship with God was broken—so then is the work that we do. And see if this sounds familiar to the way you often feel about your work. Genesis Chapter 3, beginning in verse 17.

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’
Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and into dust you will return.”

The fall has not only affected our relationship with God, and because that was one of union and intimacy with work, vocation-occupation, of being in reflection to divine being, we now experience work in a very different way because of sin. Therefore our work is often met first with futility, that you work very hard to do, to plan, to design.

My very close friend in New Jersey. His wife was my administrative assistant, so I got to know them well. He studied to be an architect, spent vast amounts of money to go to one of the top architectural schools in the world. And he would go into his first job, into a very good job at a firm in New York. But for the first three to five years he designed many buildings, but never saw one of them built. He left architecture and went into computer design and does 3-D renderings. But then that didn't work, because those weren't being built, either. He kept coming up against the wall of the thing which he felt called to do, trained to do, but experiencing the incredible chasm between that. And it was met with incredible futility. It brought into question why did he even come to New York, why did he choose the school that he did, why all those hundreds of thousands of dollars spent, hours given, time away from family, hard work, hard commutes. And for what? And how many of us would not express the same kind of frustration in the futility.

You see, the fall doesn't just affect our spiritual relationship with who God is, it affects our very

enfleshness in the work that we do. And so now the work that we were called to do with the ground, it's as if the ground is fighting back against us. The ground is hard. The seeds are few. And we just don't have enough work and enough time to get it done. And so a splinter in our mind is created between vocation and occupation. And so we become cynical, hopeless, frustrated. And we want to find either more efficient ways to do this job I cannot stand to do, or the people I work with or the boss that I have. I work as hard as I possibly can so I can race headlong into the weekend. You see what's been flipped?

So now what happens is no longer is vocation overlaid over occupation, so that when the day of rest comes we can look back and say, oh, wow, that was really great. Now it's like, when will Saturday get here? And then Saturdays get filled up, because we have work at home to do, and then that becomes a frustration. Do we wonder why substance abuse is so rampant even in very wealthy, very educated communities. Why? Because we're looking for a way to deal with the way the world feels so upside down. No longer is work a joy. We now work so that we can find some way to get away from work to finally get to do what I really want to do. So we buy all the Go Pro cameras, we do all the crazy stuff we can do, we find plenty of TV—oh, we're the Golden Age of TV—we do whatever we can. And I'm not saying any of those things are wrong, but you see how hungry we are for meaning, how hungry we are to find meaning in the purpose for why we get up on a Monday morning and go to work. It is a challenge, and it's because of none other than the fall.

And then we also experience fruitlessness. Even if we do get to build that building or we get to ratify that contract or we get to see this company started, it only last a few years. It really didn't bring the change. Can you imagine if you really love food and as a chef you start your own restaurant. But you learn that well over 70% of restaurants that are started go under, and that if you make it to five years, you're considered an institution. How fruitless does that feel? As a pastor. . . How many pastors. . . Think of Pastor John Song (soon to be Pastor), think about. . . The average life of a youth minister in a church is eighteen months. Do you know why? It's because they feel the call, and they're coming to do this, and they get so busy they run themselves ragged, and they get burned out. Partially because of the pressures they put on themselves, partly because the pressure they feel from the congregation. Let me tell you, fruitlessness and futility enters right into the heart of doing ministry.

How many of you and I have not sat together, we've prayed together, we've counseled together. How we've wanted to see change. How I've worked with people and explained the Gospel, prayed for them, loved them. And yet I look over twenty some odd years of ministry and I look and say: Is this all there is? Where is the fruit, oh, Lord? And thanks be to God, I do feel that my vocation and my occupation are in some sense related for me as a human being. But it doesn't mean that I get to escape the pounding effects of the fall. I feel it as you feel it.

So why are we looking at faith and work, then? Is it just to do a grand journey and exploration of fruitlessness and futility? Oh, the parade. Happy New Year! Right? No, it's this. It's this. Because of the fall we've seen the incredible chasm between vocation and occupation. That somehow, somewhere along the way in church history we've forgotten about the first two chapters of Genesis. And we've begun to accept that there is a distance between Sunday morning and Monday morning, and our faith and our work oftentimes have no relationship at all. That somehow Christianity is for my spirit and my relationship, not so much for the actual

work that I do. We have sculptors, we have painters, we have creatives, we have engineers who are creating all kinds of incredible things in the world. Many of you defend our country in ways we don't even know and we're not allowed to know. What in the world does your faith have anything to do with any of that? Because many of us have accepted oh, church and faith, it's for that world, because my work world tells me it's supposed to be there, and we see a distance between the two. That I'm called to be a religious chef. That I'm to deliver up to you a nice spiritual meal to keep you happy, encouraged, and challenged, as it were, but then you go to work on a Monday and you've got to figure out a way to draw up software that has actually nothing to do with Romans Chapter 8. Or so we think.

The real exploration of this is to ask this question: Does the Gospel actually mean to restore the way in which we do our work, and does it actually call us to see the hope of the Gospel, the power of grace at work, through the work God has given you. Wherever he has you is not by accident, it is by design. So we're going to be looking at this series and going further and saying, Lord, the work of the Gospel means to restore that which you intended it to be. And the Lord means to do more than just to give us forgiveness and a new relationship with him. He means to give us grace to say that tomorrow morning, whatever it is you do, you can do it as unto the Lord. Because your work, however mundane, however quiet, however secretive, however boring to other people, is actually meant to be an expression of your worship. Whether you actually utter the name Jesus in your cubicle or not, the mere fact of doing your work for the glory of God, using the gifts and the calling that he's given you, and say, Lord, bring about the Gospel restoration, even to designing software. Help me to see you at work in this. May that be the kind of prayer we can pray at the end of this month than [when] we began it.

Because the Lord is doing more than just making a group of people who can say I'm happy and forgiven. He means to make us a people who see our work as a part of Gospel restoration. Faith and work together. May the Lord aid us in this. I'm going to pray now for each of you. Whether your work is as a student, primarily, or whether your work is designing things—whatever it is— or whether your work is now done because you're retired. Guess what, your work is not done. Because guess what I don't find in the Bible? Retirement. Sorry for the bad news, but it helps us to see retirement isn't this grand part of our age where we can just stop. Because our work transcends what we're doing. And I want to pray for you, and I want to thank you. I want to thank you for the work that you do, whether I know what you do personally or not, because it matters to God, and God is using your gifts in the world in ways and with people I'll never meet, but that the Lord will do through you. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for your Word. I thank you that you have intended for work to be an expression of what it means to be a human, because it's a reflection of who you are as a Divine Being. You have brought about the Gospel, not just so we can be forgiven through the work of Christ, but so that you can restore even our work on Mondays through Fridays to be an expression of our worship. Lord, will you help us to do this. And I pray for every person here. And regardless of where they are in their life, there is work to be done, and I pray for them. May you, oh Lord, give them grace and your presence to restore beauty and grace through their work as an expression of worship to you, as the God who has worked for us and who has saved us. We give you thanks and praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.