

# Biblical Anthropology

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion"*  
(Genesis 1:26 ESV)

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*  
(Psalm 8:3-4 ESV)

## Work

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:5-17; 3:16-19

Rev. Paul Carter

### **Introduction:**

Good morning everyone! If you have your bible with you, I would love for you to open it now to Genesis 1:26-28; that's on page 1 in your church Bibles. This morning we are going to be talking about WORK. Now, I fully admit that talking about WORK the week after we hit all the Gospel highlights on Good Friday and Easter Sunday may FEEL like a bit of a let-down. I felt that in my own soul as I prepared this message. To go from the HEART of the HEART of the HEART of the Gospel to 'WORK' is a jarring transition, but this IS an important discussion. Think about it, for most of our lives we spend 36% of every waking hour we are given AT WORK. That's a LOT of time and therefore it is very important for us to think BIBLICALLY about this topic. It is all too easy for us to find the ditch on either side of the road with respect to the matter of work. Some people derive their entire sense of worth and identity from their work. That's idolatry. On the other hand, some people look at their work as essentially meaningless; it's just something they have to do in a fallen world in order to survive – that's demoralizing and dehumanizing.

So what does the Bible say about work?

We're going to spend the next three weeks talking about this issue. We'll begin TODAY by laying the foundation and then next week we'll talk about REST – because we don't work all the time, or at least we're not supposed to. We're supposed to work and then rest in some kind of reasonable and sustainable rhythm. And then finally, with our third Sunday on this topic, we'll

spend some time talking about how to integrate work and ministry. This morning we are going to look at work in each of the four ACTS or phases of the human story: CREATION, FALL, REDEMPTION and RENEWAL. Hopefully you've got your Bible open by now to Genesis 1:26-28; I'll read that passage and then flip forward one page to Genesis 2:4-17. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

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." (Genesis 1:26-28 ESV)

Flip forward one page now to Genesis 2:5-17:

When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— 7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:4-17 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord – thanks be to God!

Within these foundational narratives one of the first things we ought to notice is that:

## Creation:

### 1. Human beings were created to work

In fact, the first commandment that God gives to human beings has to do with work. He says:

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28 ESV)

Fill the earth and subdue it - that’s our two point charge. Now, we sometimes struggle with this idea of “subduing the earth”. That can sound almost as though the earth is a wild beast that we need to overpower, but that’s not what the word means. Tim Keller is helpful here; he says:

“His world is not hostile, so that it needs to be beaten down like an enemy. Rather, its potential is undeveloped, so it needs to be cultivated like a garden. So we are not to relate to the world as park rangers, whose job is not to change their space, but to preserve things as they are. Nor are we to “pave over the garden” of the created world to make a parking lot. No, we are to be gardeners who take an active stance toward their charge. They do not leave the land as it is. They rearrange it in order to make it most fruitful, to draw the potentialities for growth and development out of the soil. They dig up the ground and rearrange it with a goal in mind: to rearrange the raw material of the garden so that it produces food, flowers, and beauty. And that is the pattern for all work. It is creative and assertive. It is rearranging the raw material of God's creation in such a way that it helps the world in general, and people in particular, thrive and flourish.”<sup>1</sup>

That’s our job as human beings!! We are supposed to work with the raw materials God has provided to make the world a BETTER PLACE. That’s why, in Genesis 2, right after saying that God made us and put us in the garden, the Bible lists all the natural resources that were readily available. There was water, soil, gold and stone and our job was to work with these things so as

---

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012), 47.

to increase the fruitfulness, beauty and utility of the earth. And of course we couldn't do that without having and raising babies. Hammett and McCoy are eager to point that out:

“To care for creation is a task that will take a multitude of humans; therefore, the command to be fruitful and multiply is a prerequisite for effective stewardship of creation. That this office is part of the work of humans is also seen in Genesis 3.”<sup>2</sup>

Parenting is WORK!! Anyone who has ever had a child knows this. This is why you do not go up to a mother and say: “Are you a full-time mom or do you have a job?” If you say that, she is very likely to punch you in the face, because MOTHERING IS A FULL TIME JOB – can you say amen to that?

Amen.

Parenting is WORK – it is HARD WORK and necessary work because managing the planet requires the contribution, talents and energy of a great number of people. But the good news is that we were MADE FOR THIS! Which is why when we do something that makes the world a better place we feel ALIVE, we feel HEALTHY, we feel HUMAN – and conversely, when we are not working, we find that spiritually, physically and psychologically debilitating. Speaking of those unable to work, John Stott says:

“Their spirit becomes bitter and broken, and they are thoroughly demoralized and dehumanized.”<sup>3</sup>

Human beings were created to work. We were created to DO things that serve others, improve the world and glorify God.

BUT, it is important for us to notice as well that:

## **2. Work is not the sum total of who we are**

---

<sup>2</sup> John S. Hammett & Katie J. McCoy, *Humanity in Theology for the People of God* (Brentwood: B&H Academic, 2023), 201-202.

<sup>3</sup> John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 229 as cited in *Humanity*.

In the middle of these foundational passages about WORK, there is a very important passage about rest. Genesis 2:1-3 says:

“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.” (Genesis 2:1-3 ESV)

Now of course, it goes without saying that God didn't REST because HE NEEDED rest, rather God rested because he knew that WE NEEDED REST. God rested to set us an example. We know that because the Bible grounds the commandment about rest in God's example in creation. Exodus 20:8-11 says:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.” (Exodus 20:8-11 ESV)

Now the Hebrew word translated as “rested” there in verse 11 means more than what we tend to think of when we hear the word “rest”. It means to “*repose, be quiet, have rest: after labour*”.<sup>4</sup> It means to put your tools away, to put the project on hold and to REFLECT. It means to remember that everything you have and everything you are working with comes FROM GOD and is ultimately FOR GOD. It means to STOP so as to see the BIGGER PICTURE.

In the Bible both work and rest are important.

Work without rest leads to idolatry and rest without work leads to poverty and disaster.

Proverbs 6:10-11 says:

---

<sup>4</sup>BDB, s.v. “נוח,” 628.

“A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, 11 and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.” (Proverbs 6:10-11 ESV)

So we need to hold these things in tension. As I mentioned, we’re going to do an entire message on REST next Sunday so for now I just want you to see that WORK is a big part of who we are, as human beings, but it’s not the whole.

## **Fall:**

If you have your Bibles open still to Genesis 2, just flip forward one more page to Genesis 3:16-19 and we’ll take a look at how WORK was affected by the fall. This passage comes AFTER Adam and Eve made the decision to disobey God in an attempt to be LIKE GOD, deciding right and wrong for themselves. God came looking for the man and the women and he began to speak to them about the consequences associated with their actions:

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

17 And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:16-19 ESV)

There’s really just one big idea here in the fall narrative with respect to work and it is that:

### **1. Work is going to be harder and more frustrating on the other side of the fall**

This applies both to our work at home and our work out in the field. To the woman, who was designed to take the lead with respect to our primary assignment of having and raising children, God speaks about PAIN and DISSATISFACTION - and isn’t that the truth? Childbearing has the

capacity to wound a woman's soul like nothing else in all creation. The inability to conceive a child can leave a devastating bruise upon a woman's soul. As a pastor I've seen marriages break up over the inability of a woman to conceive. It can cause a woman to question her worth and identity – in the same way that losing a job can cause a man to question his worth and identity – which is why we have to remember that work is not the sum total of who we are – no matter what kind of work we are talking about. Brothers and sisters, before we were given a job – in the home or in the field – we were named image and likeness of God. We have to remember that.

Now, of course the matter is further complicated, for women in our culture, due to all the mixed messaging that they are subjected to. Women are being told that they are somehow letting down the team if they exit the workforce for a decade or so to raise their children. The pressure on women today is unrelenting – and it comes from the very top of the cultural pyramid. During the recent pandemic, the President of the United States, Joe Biden, got in on the act, tweeting out that:

“Nearly two million women in our country have been locked out of the workforce because they have to care for a child. ... My Build Back Better Act will make caregiving accessible and affordable and help them get back to work.”<sup>5</sup>

Wow! In one tweet he managed to communicate that parenting is not real work and that there is nothing worse imaginable for a woman than being trapped at home with her own kids. With messaging like that we ought not to be surprised that, according to a recent Wall Street Journal and NBC News study, only 43% of Americans now place a high value on having children, down 16 points from 1998, with Gen Z and millennials being least likely to say that having children is very important to them.<sup>6</sup>

The work of parenting is painful and UNAPPRECIATED in our fallen world, and therefore, fewer and fewer people are doing it.

---

<sup>5</sup> President Joe Biden as cited by Doug Mainwaring in *Moms Slam Biden for Tweet Suggesting It's Better for Them to Work Rather than Raise Their Kids*”, LifeSite News, November 23, 2021, <http://tinyurl.com/WilcoxGM1h>.

<sup>6</sup> As cited by Brad Wilcox in *Get Married: Why Americans Must Defy The Elites, Forge Strong Families, And Save Civilization* (USA: Broadside Books, 2024), 112.

And work out there in the FIELD is also harder and more dehumanizing than ever. Work has been harder and more frustrating ever since the fall, but after the Industrial Revolution it became even more so. Prior to the Industrial Revolution the majority of work was done in the home – by both men and women. Men were farmers or millers or coopers or cobblers – they likely had a workshop attached to their home. They made products from start to finish. They could include their sons in the process. They could watch as their neighbours benefited from the things that they had made. But that’s not the case anymore, in fact it seems like the further history rolls on, the more our work becomes the ENEMY of our humanity as opposed to a constituent part and that’s why most people today understand work as a necessary evil. A lot of young people today talk about “working to live” – meaning they will do what they have to WORK WISE to pay the bills but LIFE for them is everything that happens OUTSIDE OF WORK. Now part of that is them pushing back against the idolatry of their parent’s generation who LIVED TO WORK – but both of those extremes represent a departure from the biblical design. We shouldn’t “work to live” and we shouldn’t “live to work”, rather WORK should be an IMPORTANT PART of our lives as human beings, but that often isn’t the case, in this fallen world.

So how does the Gospel redeem and transform our work?

### **Redemption:**

That’s a very important question. It does that first of all by offering us rest through the person and work of Christ.

#### **1. The gospel offers us rest through the person and work of Christ**

In Matthew 11:28 Jesus says:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”  
(Matthew 11:28 KJV)

I will GIVE YOU REST!!

That’s the Gospel!



The Gospel is the good news of what God has done in Christ that we could never do for ourselves. The Gospel is the good news that a kingdom is coming that we can't build for ourselves. The Gospel is the good news that a REST is coming that we can't EARN for ourselves. As Hebrews 4:3 says:

“For we who have believed enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:3 ESV)

We enter THAT REST by BELIEVING AND RECEIVING – not by BUILDING and RECLAIMING! We cannot build the kingdom and we cannot reclaim the kingdom – we cannot go back and we cannot go up. The kingdom that we are looking for can only come down. It can only be received by those who have faith like a child. Jesus said that – do you remember? In Luke 12:32 he said:

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32 ESV)

Hearing that, believing that, understanding that is an absolute game changer.

When we understand that the things we want most in life have been accomplished through the FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST – it frees us to approach OUR WORK in a completely different way; and that’s the second way that the gospel redeems and transforms our work; by redefining the nature and purpose of it.

## **2. By redefining the nature and purpose of our work**

Under the gospel we understand that our WORK is not about saving our souls or establishing the kingdom, so what is it for? Or maybe better, WHO is it for? In Colossians 3:23 the Apostle Paul says:

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters” (Colossians 3:23 NIV11)

Paul is saying that no matter what our work is we should DO IT as unto the Lord. Our work is ultimately for him, not for whatever company we may work for. All work, in a gospel mindset, is done unto the Lord. Paul said that to the Corinthians as well; he said:

“whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV)

That’s your calling, brothers and sisters; no matter the place, no matter the time, no matter the work. You do it ultimately for the glory of God. This is the Christian doctrine of vocation. The word ‘vocation’ comes from the Greek word for calling; it is about seeing your JOB as more than just a JOB. It is about seeing it as an opportunity to glorify God AND serve other people. Every Christian is called to this. In Ephesians 4:28 Paul says:

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”  
(Ephesians 4:28 ESV)

Every Christian should aspire to do their work UNTO GOD and FOR the benefit of other people. That’s what work is all about! It’s about worship and service!

That’s the sweet spot! It’s not about earning salvation or establishing utopia. The world is still fallen and things aren’t going to be perfect until Jesus comes – but in the meantime, even in this fallen world WE CAN do WORK that glorifies God and blesses other people, and that is what we should aspire to do. Understanding our work in this way should save us from idolatry on the one hand and despair on the other. It positions our work as IMPORTANT but not ULTIMATE – thanks be to God!

Now, the final thing we need to say about work must be said within the context of the last act, as it were, of the human story.

## **Renewal:**

Many Christians may be surprised to discover that even on the other side of the great renewal, WORK as WORSHIP will be a feature of human life in the eternal kingdom.

## 1. **Work as worship will be a feature of human life in the eternal kingdom**

Remember work and rest are not opposites, rather the one enhances and enables the other. Flip forward in your Bibles to Revelation 21:23-26. John sees a vision of the eternal city, the new Jerusalem; he says:

“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. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.” (Revelation 21:23-26 ESV)

So in the new heavens and the new earth Jerusalem is portrayed as the temple city. The whole CITY is one giant menorah – by its light will the nations walk. But in addition to WALKING – which is a metaphor for living and behaving – the nations are also WORSHIPPING and WORKING. The text says that “the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it”; apparently, in a constant stream – since there is only day and no night; “they will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations.”

John is borrowing imagery here from Isaiah 60:11; which was a prophecy about the eternal city. Isaiah 60:11 says:

“Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.” (Isaiah 60:11 ESV)

So the “glory and honour” of the nations IS the WEALTH of the nations.

Are you seeing that?

For all eternity, we will be working and making wealth and bringing that with us to the eternal city to offer TOKENS OF IT in worship and praise of God. We will be working; not to EARN

something, but to EXPRESS something. Our work will be an extension of our worship – as it was intended to be in the beginning.

Brothers and sisters, I want to leave you today with the understanding that WORK is a FEATURE not a BUG in the human story. It's not ALL of who we are – but it is an important part.

Properly understood and properly directed, work is a gift, work is an honour; work is a blessing – thanks be to God! Let's pray together.