

Go(o)d Work – Faith MC – Sept. 1, 2013 – Mark 12:28-34

A woman with 2 adult sons was asked, *“What are your sons’ occupations?”*
She replied, *“Our oldest son went into business;
the other one is serving the Lord.”*

If that attitude exists here at Faith Church, I’d like to work at changing it!

You don’t think I’m talking to YOU? Listen to this:

Suppose that you work all day at your job—let’s say it’s 8 to 5.
That evening, you go to church for a committee meeting that
starts at 7:00 p.m.

Question: At what hour in that day did you begin contributing to
the mission of the church?

At what hour in that day did you start serving God?

If you believe that that your involvement in the church’s mission started
at 7:00 p.m.,
you’re in the same category as that mother talking about her sons.

Psalm 24 says, *“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.”*
Simply put, **everything is God’s.**

There is no place where God is not.

Every space, every location, everything that is—is God’s.
Every step you take, every activity in which you participate,
is on God’s turf.
Every second of life is lived in God’s time.

And yet somehow, over the centuries, we’ve tried to split space and time
into 2 pieces: 1/7 and 6/7ths – Sunday — and everything else.

We have divided the world into 2 realms: the sacred and the secular.

The “sacred”—we say mistakenly—is where God dwells.

There are sacred spaces—like this big room we’ve built to worship in.
And there are sacred times—Sunday morning, your devotional time.

And then we say—mistakenly—that other spaces, and other times—are
“secular.”

God gets a little nod on Sunday morning, and then we go to work,
which we have seen as a necessary evil,
important only as a way of putting bread on the table.

Sunday’s are sacred—sort of—but the rest of the week is seen as neutral territory
at best, or the devil’s playground at worst.

We feel good and noble and like we’re really good Christians when we
serve on a Board or a committee or teach Sunday School
because we know we’re doing the Lord’s work.

But we devalue our jobs because we have placed them into the
realm of the secular.

We get bored with our jobs because we see no purpose in them.
We even sometimes apologize about our jobs because we’ve never
made a connection between our work and God’s work.

A Gallup poll from just last month shows that many of us are unhappy
with our jobs.

Of about 100 million people surveyed, roughly 30 percent of employees are
“engaged and inspired” in their work.

At the other end of the spectrum, roughly 20 percent are miserable and
“roam the halls spreading discontent,” according to the findings.

The remaining 50 percent “are not engaged. They’re just kind of present,
but not inspired by their work or their managers,” the survey found.

I believe that a major part of that unhappiness comes from the fact
that we so rarely see our work as our mission.

We rarely think of our job as a spiritual calling.

We rarely think of the place we work as a place where GOD is at work.

You see, most of us consider ourselves spiritual when we’re praying,
but not when we’re drawing blood or pounding nails or making supper
or operating machinery or waiting on tables or changing diapers.

We know we're on God's turf in this building,
but not when we're in the barn, or in the office, or on the factory floor,
or in the classroom.

We believe we're doing the mission of the church when we take a church job,
but not when we visit a neighbor, or call a friend on the phone,
or write a supportive note, or when we simply show up for work.

I challenge you to claim ALL of your life as sacred.
I challenge you to claim your work as mission, to identify how
YOUR work, or YOUR daily activities are indeed the mission of the church,
a key part of what God is doing in the world.

I'm tired—and I think we're all tired—of faith that's only good for Sunday.
Faith that's relevant ONLY for Sunday isn't worth much.
Unless our faith is relevant for all the places OUTside this building,
it's a weak, puny, irrelevant faith.

Jesus said, "*Love God with ALL your heart, ALL your strength, ALL your mind.*"
"ALL" includes your time at work.
Jesus said, "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*"
It's time to start seeing your daily work
as the #1 way you love your neighbor.

Work is not a necessary evil. Work is not a symptom of sin.

In Genesis 2—BEFORE there was any sin—God placed Adam in
the Garden of Eden and said, "*Get to work. Take care of this place.
Do some farming. Do some gardening.*" [Gen. 2:15]

Work is good—it's part of God's plan.
Sin made work more difficult—that's what Genesis 3 is about—
but sin is not the cause of work;
work is not God's punishment for sin.

Given the fact that God put Adam to work in a perfect garden,
I don't believe that heaven will consist only of sitting around playing harps.

I think we'll work in heaven—but we'll never get tired, we'll never get bored,
we'll work together, we'll work with joy and with purpose,
and all our work will be productive.

The Bible sees work and spirituality as integrated.

The Bible sees life as ONE.

The Bible takes a positive view of work, and the biblical writers
pay attention to peoples' work:

Adam & Eve were gardeners.

Abraham and Sarah were wealthy ranchers who had to leave the security
of retirement to take on a new job.

Joseph made a name for himself in Egypt because of his work for Pharaoh.

Moses saw the burning bush while he was at work,
not while he was sitting in his pew at church.

Ruth met Boaz out in the grain field.

David wrote poems and music at work, while he was watching sheep.

The prophet Amos was a farmer who also pruned sycamore trees.

Jesus worked most of his life as a carpenter.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, and after meeting Jesus he did not go to
seminary—he just did his tax collecting differently.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishermen.

Luke was a doctor.

Paul was a leather-worker, a tent-maker, an occupation by which he
continued to support himself during his missionary travels.

On this Labor Day weekend,
I invite you to begin the process of placing your work within the
realm of the sacred.

I invite you to begin the process of seeing your work as your mission—
not just as a job—but as an important part of what God wants to
accomplish in this world.

It's good work because it's God work;
that's the point of my sermon title.

The ministry of Faith Mennonite Church, you see, is not restricted to
the Boards and committees listed in our church directory.
The TOTAL ministry of Faith Mennonite Church would list every job,
every occupation, every activity, every way that you connect with
your neighbor, every way you participate in life on earth every day.
That would make a VERY thick book!

The ministry of this church therefore includes not only people who work for pay,
but retired people, people with disabilities, students, young, old,
everybody.

There are some congregations that have placed a sign above all the EXIT
doors in their church building so that everyone can see the sign
on their way OUT of the building. The sign says: **“Servants’ Entrance.”**

Placing that sign on the way OUT of the building is a reminder that
it's when you LEAVE the church building that you are entering
your most important arena of service.

As you leave this place today, as you go through the doors to the outside world,
you are not moving from the sacred to the secular;
you are moving from a small sacred space into a much larger and more
important sacred space. All space is God's, and it's ALL sacred.

Claim God's call for your work. Your work is your ministry.
It is your service to God and to others.
It's good work because it's God's work.