

Text: Colossians 3:22-24

Title: “Make Your Job a Joy”

Probably the last thing you’re thinking about on this Labor Day weekend is your labor. In fact, on weekends like this we try to forget our job. Only in America would you celebrate Labor Day by doing no labor. I would venture a guess that when I even mention the notion of going to work that a curtain of dread just falls over some of you. Some of you dread your work because you’re bored. You’ve got a job that is ridiculously mundane ... you’ve got a job where you’re not being challenged ... you’ve got a job that doesn’t seem to make any real difference in the world. Some of you dread your work because of who you have to work with.

ILLUSTRATION –I heard the story of a man traveling in a hot air balloon when he got lost. He dropped his altitude and saw a lady on the ground and he shouted out to her below: “Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don’t know where I am.” The lady below replied, “You’re in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You’re between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and between 59 and 60 degrees west longitude.” The balloonist said, “Lady, you must be an engineer. Who else would spout off such useless information? You’re no help to me.” The lady replied, “You must be in management. You don’t know where you are or where you’re going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise, which you’ve no idea how to keep, and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it’s my fault.”

Open your Bibles to Colossians 3:22. Most of us will spend at least one-third of our adult life at our job. If your job is a homemaker it is much more than that. But most of us probably don’t see the connection between our work and our walk with God. Well the Scripture we have before us shows us there is a huge connection. **Read Colossians 3:22-25.**

Let me help us see the bigger picture of the Bible before we zoom in on our text today.

First, we need to see the bigger picture of the creation of God as it relates to work. The very first words of the Bible are, “In the beginning God created...” So from the outset we see God working. Shortly after that in Genesis we read that God created the first human beings and putting them to work cultivating the garden. He could have created a garden that didn’t need to be tended, but instead He chose to give humans the dignity of work. This was before they sinned. And it was all good. After they sinned, they changed ... and their work changed. Work became painful for them. Nothing was easy. Everything was a hassle. It’s like your job is to mow yards, but now have to wear a 50 pound backpack all day long while you’re doing your work. We are sinful humans living in a sinful world. So now you understand why you struggle with getting excited about going to work. So that’s the first part of the bigger picture we need to see.

Second, we need to see the bigger picture of workers in the NT. Paul starts in v.22 addressing “slaves.” In NT times slaves were in about the most hopeless situation you could imagine.

Mostly they were victims of war. If you lived in a village that was invaded by an enemy army and your people were defeated, you would likely be carried off as a slave. Because we live in a land where slavery existed at one time it isn't all that hard for us to envision what their life was like. Now when the Gospel came to places like Colossae (in modern day Turkey) some of those most receptive to the Good News were slaves. So how is a "saved slave" supposed to act toward their master. Yet we learn from what Paul says to these lowliest of workers something about how our job can be joy. That's the second part of the big picture we need to see.

Third, we need to see the bigger picture of the prevailing attitude or philosophy that infected the culture, including some people in the church. There's a dangerous teaching floating around Colossae known as Gnosticism. I don't have time to give you a lengthy explanation, but one of the primary beliefs of Gnosticism was the faulty understanding that how you treat your wife or children, how you behave at work, your entertainment choices have nothing to do with your spiritual life. Gnosticism allowed you to be "spiritual" without being holy. This allowed people to sort of compartmentalize their lives so they could claim to worship God, but not have to live under His authority in their everyday life. And this is where our text, Colossians 3:22-25, fits into the bigger picture of the book of Colossians.

Jesus is Lord of every area of our lives, including our jobs. He gives meaning to our work, even if our jobs are frustrating and difficult. And because of that our job can become a joy, if we order our lives according to the Word of God. Your job can be your joy when you...

1. WORK WITH REVERENT SUBMISSION

Colossians 3:22a - Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything;

The word "obey" is the word that is used of a child obeying their parent. Their obedience is complete ... "in everything." In the workplace this obedience becomes a form of submission to our bosses whom God has placed in authority over us. Submitting to your earthly master (boss) is connected to submitting to your heavenly Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 6:1 - All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.

So when we are submissive, lining ourselves up under the authority of another, we are being good witnesses to the name and the fame of God.

And attitude is everything. When we are disrespectful of those God has placed in authority over us it is sin. Do you roll your eyes when your boss gives you a frustrating assignment? Do you sow discord among your fellow employees? You're bringing reproach upon Christ when you do that.

Now, what if you're the boss and everyone reports to you? Is there any place for submission? Yes, you submit to God and obey God when He instructs you to treat your employees with fairness.

Colossians 4:1 - Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

You see, the fact is that as Christ-followers we all live under authority. And God expects us to submit to the authorities He has placed over us by obeying them, unless, of course, they tell us to do something that is sin and would cause us to disobey God. Earlier in Colossians 3:18 Paul taught that wives are to submit to their husbands. And in v.20 children are to submit to and obey their parents. Romans 15:1 says that everyone should submit to the governing authorities by obeying the laws of the land. It is God who has established their authority. This even applies in the church where Hebrews 13:17 says to obey and submit to your spiritual leaders in the church because they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account to the ultimate authority of God.

Ephesians 5:21 - Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

When we refuse to live under the authority of those whom God has placed over us, it's not just that we are rebelling against authorities. It reveals a rebellious heart toward God and we must repent of that.

When you go to work with an attitude of submission out of reverence for Christ your job can be a joy. But you also...

2. WORK WITH THE RIGHT MOTIVATION

If your motivation isn't right then you will not be able to bring the maximum glory to God through your work and consequently you will not find the joy in our job. If the primary motivation in your work is just the paycheck, or if your motivation in your work is to prop up your self-esteem by excelling at work, God will not be honored in your work. So what is the motivation?

Colossians 3:22b - And do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

So the question is, "Who is your ultimate boss?" If your "big boss" is the woman or man who gives you your paycheck, then you obviously will work to please him. But she isn't always looking over your shoulder. And when she isn't you might be tempted to not give it your best. Why? Your motivation is to be *seen* doing the right thing. The words "win their favor" mean literally to be a "people-pleaser." That's a terrible way to live and to work ... as a people-pleaser. When we're people-pleasers we become obsessed with the approval of others when as

Christ-followers our self-esteem is rooted in our acceptance in Christ. Then we serve others with a different motivation.

ILLUSTRATION – Do any of you ever watch the TV series “Undercover Boss?” In this series the CEOs of major companies disguise themselves as rank-and-file workers to see how their company really works ... how employees really act when their boss isn’t looking. Well, in a sense the Lord is the true Undercover Boss.

Your motivation is to work, as Paul says here in v.22, “with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.” What does that mean? It means that it starts in my heart with sincerity and with a singleness of motivation to worship God. Then my job becomes my joy because it is the expression of my heart of service to God, not just to an earthly boss. And that leads me to the next way to make your job a joy:

3. WORK WITH FERVENT PASSION

There was some interesting research done by Reuters back a few years ago. The study revealed that in the US 85% of workers said they could work harder at their job. More than half of them claimed they could double their effectiveness *if they wanted to*. Note, “if they wanted to.”

Let’s face it. Most of us have parts of our job we don’t enjoy. Some of you may enjoy nothing about your job. So what do you do? Remember this: Your work can never be your savior. Your work is not your identity. Your joy in life ultimately comes from the Lord Jesus. Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” Rejoice *in the Lord*. Find your joy in doing your job for Him.

Colossians 3:23 - Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

Again, the motivation is that we are doing it, not for men, but for the Lord. And we should do it with a passion. We should put our mind, our will and our emotions into our work. Football coaches are fond of saying to their players, “Leave it all on the field.” It’s a way of saying, “Don’t walk off the field thinking, ‘I could have given a little more out there.’”

There’s one more way to make your job a joy.

4. WORK WITH A CONFIDENT EXPECTATION

Colossians 3:24 - since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Christ-follower, the benefits of your job are out of this world ... literally. They are spiritual. You may get noticed for what you do, and your boss may give you a bonus or a raise or promotion. But if you don’t get those rewards and there’s another payday coming. The greatest

notice and the greatest reward you get is spiritual ... it's from the Lord. Paul said, "You will receive an inheritance *from the Lord* as a reward."

Now slaves typically owned no property. The hope of them ever possessing an inheritance of land or property from their master was slim to none. But for a Christ-following slave they had the assurance that something much better was waiting for them. When they "got off of work" in this life, no matter how badly they were treated, a reward from the Lord awaited them.

With our eye on that inheritance, that reward, we can endure anything we have to put up with in this life.

Don't be one of the millions of people who have no passion for what they do. Don't be one of those employees with a bad attitude. Don't be one of those employees who constantly complains about their fellow workers or the dress code or the extra hours. Certainly don't be one of those workers who steal from their company, or don't give a full day's work for a full day's pay.

Colossians 3:17 - And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

We talk around here all the time about bringing your worship with you to church. How about bringing your worship with you to work?

ILLUSTRATION – We have come to worship today in what we call the Sanctuary. It is a room where sacred things happen. The room itself is not sacred. It's what happens in this room that makes it a "sanctuary" ... a sacred place. When you go to work tomorrow (or Tuesday) how about making your cubicle a sanctuary ... a sacred place where worship happens. How about making your classroom a sanctuary ... a sacred place where worship happens. How about making that hospital ward a sanctuary ... a sacred place where worship happens. How about making that car you commute in to work a sanctuary ... a sacred place where worship happens. How about making that kitchen where you cook dinner or the nursery where you change diapers a sanctuary ... a sacred place where worship happens. Then your job will be a joy, because we are created to worship God in all things.