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**Grace Evangelical Church**  
**Sunday, August 31, 2008**  
**Labor Day Weekend**  
**"Work – An Adventure?"**  
**Colossians 3:22-4:1**

A pipe burst in a medical doctor's house, and he called a plumber. The plumber arrived, unpacked his tools, did mysterious plumber-type things for a while, and handed the doctor a bill for \$600.

The doctor exclaimed, "This is ridiculous! Even I don't make that much as a doctor!"

The plumber waited for him to finish and quietly said, "Neither did I when I was a doctor."

Perhaps you have experienced one of those plumbing bills. I know I have, not quite as much as the one in this story.

But this is Labor Day Weekend, with Monday called Labor Day. It is a Day set aside to celebrate the value and dignity of work, and its role in the American way of life. The founder of Labor Day remains unclear, but some credit either Peter McGuire, co-founder of the American Federation of Labor, or Matthew Maguire, a secretary of the Central Labor Union, for proposing the holiday. The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, in New York City, in accordance with the plans of the Central Labor Union. On June 28, 1894, Congress passed an act making the first Monday in September of each year a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories.

There have been various celebrations of Labor Day over the years, but today it is more a day of rest, relaxation, and recreation, and the end of the summer activities and the beginning of the fall schedules, back to school particularly for many, along with the beginning of the college football season.

Since this is Labor Day Weekend, it seems most fitting to consider what God says about work, what God says about labor.

Notice what our text says about work.

Note verse 23 & 24 of Colossians 3.

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily for the Lord rather than for men . . . then verse 24 – It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Let's ask some questions as we consider this text.

## **1. Why is Jesus Christ the One the believer serves?**

### **(1) He is the Creator.**

That should cause us to start thinking about who is the source of work. Where did work come from in the first place? Or put it another way, why do you and I have the innate desire to work, yes, to create things?

That answer can only be found in the Bible in the Book of Genesis, the Book of Beginnings. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. In fact, He created the world and all that is in it along with man in six days, which I take as 24 hour days, and then the text tells in Genesis 2:2, "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested (ceased from His work – for God never gets tired, nor needs sleep – he doesn't slumber or sleep (Psalm 121) on the seventh day from all His work which He had done."

How phenomenal is that. The Creator of the Universe ceased from His creative work of the universe and mankind, and used that day to teach the principle for mankind of a sabbath rest, cessation from normal activity.

**Who was the agent of creation of this world and mankind?** In the beginning God – Elohim – the strong one, the eternal God, who exists as one in three persons. In the New Testament in Colossians 1:16 we find that Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things both in heavens and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or rulers, or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Jesus Christ – in His preincarnate state, then, as the eternal Son of God, is the Creator of the world and the Creator of mankind, particularly Adam and Eve as the first human beings to live on planet earth.

And He put Adam into that beautiful garden of Eden, the garden of delight, to cultivate and to keep it – to guard it.

God put within Adam and later Eve the ability to do work, to labor, yes to create and develop the world in which He put them.

Dr. Paul Tournier says that this is God giving Adam and later Eve the great adventure of work. Then Tournier says that Adam named the animals, the adventure of science – which consists of giving a name to everything so as to be able to define, classify, and analyze it. Then God created Eve for Adam and brought her to him to be his wife – the great adventure of community.

Jesus Christ is the great adventurer, willing to risk by creating mankind, yes, knowing what he would do when tempted, but willing to take the risk and be an adventurer with the couple He created to be on an adventure with Him, for He told them in Genesis 1:26-28 to go forth and be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and rule over it.

And in that creaturely holy state before their sin, Adam and Eve were able to do everything in concert with their Maker, their Creator. They not only had direct fellowship with their God, but they were able to glorify Him in everything that they did, for it was all for Him and not for themselves, for there was no selfishness in them before the fall. It was a perfect adventure with God and Adam and Eve doing every thing to the glory of God – showing Him off in all that they thought, said, and did.

### **What an environment. Beyond our human comprehension.**

We are not sure how long it lasted, but it came to an abrupt end when Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of Satan to disobey their eternal Creator and Friend.

At that moment, sin entered the human race and the world itself, and as we read Genesis 3 we find that the consequences of that sin affected the creation itself, man would have to labor in a world of thorns and thistles, burdened with sin, eventually returning to dust. Work for God that was an adventure with Him turned into a laborious task with no eternal purpose and meaning. Work would only be for man's own accomplishments not for God's accomplishments.

Tournier says, "so work, which before the Fall was a pure and lovely adventure, is turned into wearisome toil – not as a result of the spirit of adventure itself but because of the wrong use: man wished to conduct his adventure on his own, in his own way, instead of entering into God's adventure. From then on the burden of toil weighs upon him, and takes on the form of slavery, and often is a crushing and fruitless effort. Man comes to curse labor, forgetting its true meaning – that is an adventure to which God in his goodness has called him."

What was needed? A redeemer. Genesis 3:15 gave the prophecy that He would come, the seed of the woman would come.

## **(2) He is the Redeemer.**

**The seed of the woman came – Jesus Christ was born as the God-man.**

### **1. As an example – As Jesus worked in His daily life.**

**In His life He came to show us who God is and how God would live on planet earth. In His living on planet earth, Jesus Christ also showed us something about work.**

**John 6:38 – “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”**

**John 5:19 – “Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, Truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.”**

**John 8:29 – Jesus’ words, “I always do the things that pleasing to Him” that is to His heavenly Father. An astounding and amazing verse.**

**Jesus did His work on earth in a harmonious concert with His heavenly Father. He was demonstrating in His life that it is possible to serve His heavenly Father without a flaw, even under pressure and rejection, He did not retaliate, nor strike back, and of course eventually submitted to His Father’s will and went to the cross to pay the penalty for our sin and win for us His kind of life, eternal life. Jesus as the second Adam did what the first Adam failed to do. In that process Jesus always glorified His heavenly Father. That’s why Jesus told Philip that He who has seen ME has seen the Father.**

**What did Christ say in His high priestly prayer to His heavenly Father?**

**John 17:4 – “I have glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work which You have given me to do.”**

**In His service on earth, Jesus demonstrated that He was truly in fellowship with His Father doing His work, His will, to the glory of His Father.**

**But Jesus didn’t just come to serve, for that would not provide for humanity the redemption that was needed as members of the Adamic race.**

**As a Redeemer, Jesus Christ must also be the Savior.**

## **2. As the Savior – Jesus in His death, burial, and bodily resurrection!**

**In the biblical God’s economy, the wages of sin is death, spiritually and physically. There must come someone who can pay for those wages – by dying, be buried, and then rise again from the dead to demonstrate that death, the wages of sin, has been paid for, and that death itself has been defeated.**

**Yes, Jesus was that someone, who was made sin for us who knew no sin as He hung on the cross. He was buried and rose bodily from the grave on the third day. He won His forgiveness and eternal life for us.**

**It is our privilege to accept Him as our personal Savior. I trust you have made that decision for Jesus Christ. If not you need to consider that He died for you, in your place to pay your penalty for breaking God’s law, and now is alive to give you His forgiveness and eternal life as you ask Him into your life. Don’t miss the Savior, who is waiting to come into your life and give to you His forgiveness and new life.**

**Now one of the things that happens to the believer in Jesus Christ is that he is restored to fellowship with God the Father through Jesus Christ, and the eternal life He has received, which is Christ’s life can only be lived out in the believer as he or she submits to Christ on a daily basis by yielding to the indwelling Holy Spirit.**

**Which means that there is a third aspect to Christ as the Redeemer.**

## **3. As the Master – the Lord of our lives.**

**Notice Colossians 3:24 of our text again. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.**

**The word used for Lord here is kurios- meaning an owner, a master, a sovereign, a potentate.**

Paul is writing to those who knew what slavery was all about, for about half the people of that day were slaves, along with others highly educated. In many homes the slaves helped educate and discipline the children. Many of the slaves came to know Christ as personal Savior. What should they do? Rebel against their masters?

No. They must remember that now Jesus Christ is their Savior and Master. He is the one they must obey and serve.

**This is one of the biggest challenges in one's life with Jesus Christ – To let Him be the Master of our thoughts, our attitudes, our words, and our actions.**

It's easy to have a bad attitude toward someone if they do something to you that is not right. It's easy to say something to someone that is derogatory. It's easy to do even small tasks out of duty. **We want to do our tasks for our own glory rather than for God's glory. We want to do an adventure for ourselves rather than with and for God.**

**Our hearts are selfish and very deceitful. Only through yielding to Christ and letting Him be on the throne of our lives that we enjoy work of any kind as an adventure with and for God for His glory.**

**That's why we asked the question: "Why is Jesus Christ to be the One the believer serves?"**

**Answer: Jesus Christ is our Creator, Redeemer, and Master.**

**Which leads to our second question, which is already been answered in one sense but needs to be emphasized.**

## **2. For whom am I working? (as a follower of Jesus Christ)**

**Colossians 3:23 – As for the Lord (Kurios) – Master – Sovereign – not for men.**

**So when a person goes to work as an employee or employer, or is in work for himself or herself, he or she is really working for his or her Master, Jesus Christ.**

One does his or her best in one's work for one is ultimately serving one's Master, Jesus Christ. That is what Paul is telling the Christian slaves in that day and what he is telling those who were Masters as well – to treat their slaves with justice and fairness, and slaves are to serve with a sincere, a pure heart, having the right attitude. Both slave and master should have the respect of Christ for each other and treat each other as Christ would treat them.

When students return to school, for whom are you doing your school work, or if you are in music, in sports, whatever, do you realize that you are doing your tasks for the Lord – your Master? I trust so.

Husbands, wives, children, Dads, and Moms, in all of our tasks, some which are very mundane and routine, do we realize that we are to be doing our tasks for the our Master, Jesus Christ? Sometimes hours are long and tedious, and gratefulness may not always be there, but doing it for Jesus makes an eternal difference.

I understand that there used to be a sign put over the kitchen sink, that divine services were held there 3 times a day. That may have been before dishwashers, although some dishes and pots and pans are washed at the kitchen sink.

As we serve in our local church in teaching, in serving on the different boards and committees, in helping in various ways around this building, we are reminded in this text that we are doing our tasks for the Lord not for men.

**Perhaps it is well to ask ourselves as we serve the Lord, "Am I seeking to please the Lord? Or Am I doing this to get honor from men?" I trust that it is the former.**

**The challenge for each of us as followers of Christ is to emulate His example, as we walk in His steps, to seek in the power of the Spirit to please the Lord in everything that we think, do, and say.**

**There's another question we must ask.**

### **3. For what am I working?**

**Colossians 3:23** tell us that "whatever you do, do it for the Lord – your Master.

Yes, we need wages so we have money to live on. One's work can provide one a certain sense of prestige. But **the key is that we work to do the will of God.**

That's why Jesus said, as we quoted earlier, that He came not to do His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him (John 6:38).

**And think about all that Jesus did in healing the sick, raising the dead, ministering to His disciples, experiencing rejection, death, and resurrection, eventually ascension into heaven. In all of that He was doing the will of His Father. Amazing!**

This means that whether tasks around the house, at work, at school, in the neighborhood, or in whatever one does, as a follower of Jesus Christ, the believer is excited about doing God's will in the task being performed.

God's will is not something we always keep searching for. God's will includes living a holy life by obeying the indwelling Holy Spirit, submitting to the Lordship of Christ in our lives. Being the husband, dad, and grand dad that I should be. Being the wife, mother, grandmother that Christ wants me to be. For children obeying Dad and Mom and seeking to please the Lord in all that you do. Serving the Lord in the local church. Seeking to reach out to others who have different needs, especially the need of the Savior. God's will is very practical and should affect each of us on a moment by moment basis.

If the believer is obeying the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Word of God, he or she is doing the will of God. How exciting and fulfilling is that!!

### **4. What kind of an attitude should I have in my work?**

**(1) Colossians 3:22 – sincere – or a pure attitude of submitting to the Lord – no brown nosing, trying to get ahead at the expense of others – not manipulating, but giving of my best in the task. Yes, not double-minded but focused on Christ as the task is done.**

**(2) Colossians 3:23 – Do your work heartily as for the Lord.**

**Heartily** is a great word – This word is filled with emotion, energy and pathos. Each personality is different, but the believer in Jesus Christ is inwardly excited and enthused about serving the Lord regardless of the task. The believer in Jesus Christ has some spontaneity in His service for the Lord.

Complaining and serving the Lord out of duty causes the believer to lose the attitude of Christ of doing one's tasks for Him with the enthusiasm of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Yes, Christ served people who were against Him, even forgiving His enemies. Christ never gave up serving His Heavenly Father.

#### **John Stott has written.**

- People are illogical, unreasonable and self-centered. Love them anyway.
- If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.
- If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.
- The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
- Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.
- The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.
- People favor underdogs, but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway.
- What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.
- People really need help, but may attack you if you do help them. Help them anyway.

- Give the world the best you have and you may get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway.

There's a fifth question we must ask when we talk about work for the Lord being an adventure.

### 5. With whom am I working?

Certainly, as our text tells us and we have considered, we are working for the Lord and with the Lord, but we are also working with other individuals.

**Before talking to slaves and masters who would be working with each other, Paul, in Colossians 3 has also talked to the entire body of Christ and then to the relationships in the family between husbands and wives, children, and fathers.**

Paul is reminding his readers and us today that in serving the Lord we are in many instances serving others and serving along side others. It's what is taught by Peter in his first letter that we are a priesthood of believers who minister to each other in our families, our church family, then we bring Christ to our workplace, our schools, and to our neighborhoods.

**The true account is told of the railroad engineer who came to his pastor as a new believer and asked the pastor if there was a position in the church he could fill. The pastor told him that all the positions were filled at this time, but asked him if his fireman was a believer in Christ. God has called each of us to minister to those in our family, those in our church family, those in our work-a-day world, and those at school. Are we being priests for our Lord?**

### 6. What kind of a workplace am I in?

I'm sure it wasn't the easiest to be a slave in the days of the New Testament. Perhaps it wasn't the easiest to be a Master at that time either. Regardless, Paul exhorts the slaves who knew Christ as Savior to obey Jesus Christ and show His attitude of purity and enthusiasm for the tasks being carried out. Paul exhorts the Christian master to be just and fair with their slaves.

So many of our tasks are menial, seemingly. Getting up in the morning, getting ready for the day, and getting dressed. Preparing meals. Eating our food. Going to the store. Driving here and driving there. Going through the daily routine. And if you have small children, changing diapers, reading books, playing with them, putting them to bed, and the list could go on and on.

**But in all of that, there can be an example of servant hood of Christ given as one serves the Lord with inner excitement and joy.**

But then there are the different jobs that we have. The different responsibilities at the church, and at school, and in our neighborhoods.

Regardless of wherever we are, we can make a difference by bringing Jesus Christ into the situation with His attitude of sincerity and enthusiasm.

D.L. Moody was an effective and well-known evangelist in the late 1800's. He was used mightily by God in America and Great Britain. He started Moody Church and Moody Bible Institute, while also having a Bible Conference ground in Northfield, Mass.

One time a large group of European pastors came to one of D. L. Moody's Northfield Bible Conferences in Massachusetts in the late 1800s. Following the European custom of the time, each guest put his shoes outside his room to be cleaned by the hall servants overnight. But of course this was America and there were no hall servants.

Walking the dormitory halls that night, Moody saw the shoes and determined not to embarrass his brothers. He mentioned the need to some ministerial students who were there, but met with only silence or pious excuses. Moody returned to the dorm, gathered up the shoes, and, alone in his room, the world's only famous evangelist

began to clean and polish the shoes. Only the unexpected arrival of a friend in the midst of the work revealed the secret.

When the foreign visitors opened their doors the next morning, their shoes were shined. They never know by whom. Moody told no one, but his friend told a few people, and during the rest of the conference, different men volunteered to shine the shoes in secret.

Perhaps the episode is a vital insight into why God used D. L. Moody as He did. He was a man with a servant's heart and that was the basis of his true greatness. Moody wasn't concerned about the place in which He worked for the Lord, even polishing shoes for His Lord. No task was too menial for this true servant of the Lord. **May it be the same for us as we serve the Lord where He puts us.**

### **7. Why am I here in this job, or doing this work, this task?**

Regardless of our task, we are in a certain place of employment, in our tasks at home, at school in the neighborhood, or in a specific stage in life, all for the ultimate purpose of glorifying God. If you are doing your task for the Lord and not for men, as the text tells us, your life is glorifying God as Paul told the Corinthians (I Corinthians 10:31), "Whether, then, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

How great a reminder is that! How much eating and drinking do we do in a day. It can be done to the glory of God, to show Him off, is really what glorifying God is all about.

If we only grasp that in the smallest task, as we do that task in the Spirit's power for the Lord, He is shown off in that particular task – such a realization should daily cause our lives to serve the Lord with His enthusiasm and grace.

But it means that in the power of the Spirit we go forward to do the Lord's will.

We have to make that daily choice to do our tasks for the glory of the Lord and not for our own glory.

But there is one more question we must ask.

### **8. What does God do about my glorifying Him in His power in the task done for Him in His will?**

**Our text provides the answer.**

**Colossians 3:24 reads, "Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."**

God never forgets your faithful service for Him. He promises to give you the reward of the inheritance, perhaps the crown of righteousness which Paul talks about in II Timothy 4:8. But I think its more than that, for the reward of the inheritance, is really Christ Himself, of having the privilege to live with Him and serve Him forever in that eternal state and live in that indescribable city, called the New Jerusalem.

God is just waiting to tell us when we enter His presence, "Well done, you good and faithful servant – enter into the joy of your Master. You can now rest from your labors for your deeds to follow with you." ( Matthew 25:23; Revelation 14:13).

What a great God we serve. He gives us the privilege to be on an eternal adventure with Him in every task we do in His power for His glory, and He rewards us for our faithfulness to Him.

**But the choice is our each day as a follower of His to go forth in His power to do the various tasks He gives us to please Him for His glory!**

### **The story is told of the family who had two sisters.**

One of the girls was eleven, an excellent swimmer, and spent a lot of time practicing for swimming meets. The other sister was five, but showed no willingness to pay the price to practice and win swim meets.

Over the Christmas break, the older sister won a 220 meter race. Her father was reading the newspaper article about Lisa's success, and asked the younger daughter, "Shelly, wouldn't you like to work hard and get your name

in the paper and have a good time?" "Dad," the little girl replied, "I'd rather just sit here and eat cookies and drink milk the rest of my life."

Yes, we can do our tasks in the Lord's power for His glory, going for the gold as it were, the prize of the upward calling of Christ Jesus, or we can "sit around and eat cookies and drink milk" and let others do the tasks to the glory of God in the power of God's Spirit.

May we go for the gold in all our tasks whether small or great. May that be so in our service here at the church as we have need for people to serve in places of leadership as our nominating committee is at work. We need people to step forward and teach our children and youth in Sunday School. We need helpers in AWANA. In fact, we need to reach out in a greater way with AWANA this year. Are there children in your neighborhood you can invite and bring to AWANA? There are opportunities to be involved in small group Bible Studies. We certainly don't want to be a Sunday Church only. We want to grow spiritually and numerically to the glory of God.

**Let's enjoy being on an adventure with the Lord Jesus Christ this week. Let's serve Him with purity and enthusiasm so that He receives the glory, for He is LORD!**