

The proper attitude towards work

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[0 : 00] Well, as children, most of us would have at one time or another heard the fairy tale Snow White. Maybe your mom or your teacher read it to you when you were growing up.

And you'll remember in the fairy tale, the seven dwarves going off to the mine each morning with the happy song on their lips. Hi-ho, hi-ho, it's off to work we go.

You know, it's one of Disney's most famous songs and it really sticks in your head. And as kids, listening to the song of these dwarves going off to the mine really instilled in us a positive picture of going to work, didn't it?

Work looked like fun when we looked at the fairy tale. We really looked forward to growing up and getting a job. That is until we actually did grow up and realized that the world is not full of happy dwarves singing on their way to work.

You know, looking forward to another great day in the mine or the office. Rather, we discovered the world is full of tired people dragging themselves out of bed reluctantly to a job and to a boss who is unforgiving and colleagues who tend to wear them down even more and in a job that is just unrewarding.

[1 : 20] That is typically what people face on a Monday morning. And in that environment, which may well describe your work to some extent, as I said, whatever work you do, it's very difficult, isn't it, to have a positive attitude to our journey to work as we go on our work.

I don't think we can join those seven dwarves most days and sing. It's off to work we go. And so as we kick off this series this month looking at Psalms at work, I thought it would be useful to start with a psalm which will help us just to have the right attitude to work even before we get there.

A psalm that if we remember and recite to ourselves, it'll set us up for a work day, probably much better than anything on the radio will do.

And that psalm that I want us to look at this morning is Psalm 8, which I've called a psalm for the journey to work. And it's a psalm that will help us because firstly of what it teaches us about God himself.

What it teaches us about God is that God is a worker. That's the first thing we really pick up in the psalm. Now, that doesn't quite sound right, does it? God is a worker.

[2 : 29] When we hear the word worker, we picture a laborer, maybe with a hard hat, working late into the evening to provide for his family. It doesn't seem to describe God. God should be above all that kind of stuff.

Above labor and above work. And yet in the Bible, we read about a God who is certainly not above hard work. And indeed, a God who is not above getting his hands dirty to provide for those he loves. We see that God is a worker. And God is presented to us in Scripture as the model worker. The ideal worker. Look at verse 3 in Psalm 8, for example. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place.

You see, David, who writes this psalm, he's reflecting on God's work. He's reflecting on the product of God's work. Everything we enjoy in creation is a result of God's work.

It's because God one day decided, let me do some work. And that's everything we enjoy is because of that, because of God's efforts. And we need to take that in.

[3 : 36] We need to just stop and take in that everything we have and enjoy is because God is a worker. Because too often, you know, we're like ungrateful children towards God, aren't we?

If you're a parent, you'll know what I mean. Children, especially young children, seem to think that their food and clothes literally fall out of the sky, don't they? It's only when they get older that they realize that their mom and dad actually have to go to work each day to afford the stuff that they enjoy.

They have to learn to appreciate what their parents do for them, which they only really tend to do once they leave the nest themselves, don't they? But towards God, we're all like that. We're all typically like ungrateful children. We have to learn to appreciate and acknowledge all the work that God has done. And that's why we have, amongst other reasons, the Psalms. The Psalms help us to stop and go, yeah, you're right, David. I really should appreciate these things that I just take for granted. To appreciate what God has done for us, not only what he has done for us in the past, but what he continues to do for us to give us life every day, which we just take for granted.

[4 : 48] The work of his fingers, the Psalm says. Think of the work of his fingers. The orbit of the planet and the rotation of the planet, which provides light and heat from the sun, and then provides darkness for rest, and cycle of day and night, and the seasons, which provide the food we need to eat, and trees, which provide the oxygen for our lungs to survive minute by minute, and the fields and the soil that provides the nutrients for the food that our bodies need to survive.

We really need to stop and take in the majesty of God's work and what it means for us. But sadly, we typically don't, and it's only when we lack these things for a while that we really appreciate them. I mean, for example, how much do you appreciate water at the moment? I hope you appreciate it. With our dams at probably 10-11% of usable water left.

I bet you appreciate water now more than you did before the drought. I bet you think now before you flush the toilet or run the water to brush your teeth.

And we pray, we pray that God will send rain, but have you ever considered that maybe the reason he's holding it back is just to give us a little taste of what life is like without his daily provision? What life would be like if God took some time off work?

[6 : 19] And so the first important fact that we learn about work from the psalm is that work is part of who God is. God is a worker. And that already should help us to get a new perspective on work and our work when we go to work.

Namely, we shouldn't think of work like we typically do, that it's just a necessary evil that we need to get done to pay the bills. No. We need to realize that work in and of itself is good.

It's part of who God is. It's a reflection of God's character. To work, for us to work, is part of what it means to be made in God's image.

Because God is a worker. So we should, first of all, not look for excuses to be lazy and not only consider working when we desperately need to work, but see work as part of what it means to be human.

It's what God has made us to do and it's meant to be good. Because it comes from God. It's part of God's character. And Jesus himself said, God is working.

[7 : 32] Even today, God is at work. So that's the first thing we learn. But that's not all we learn. We also learn that God made us to work for him. The second point I want us to get from the psalm.

Now when David, who writes the psalm, as I said, considers all of God's work when he's thinking and meditating over it. He doesn't want to take it for granted.

So he stops and he just thinks about God's work and what he's done. What does it lead David to do? Well, we read in the psalm it leads to praise. To consider God's work naturally should lead to praising him.

In fact, right at the beginning and right at the end of the psalm, it's framed in by this expression of praise. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

And then he ends. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Because considering God's work should lead us to praise him. It's like when you consider a work of art that you really like.

[8 : 38] You praise the artist, don't you? And you want other people to appreciate what you appreciate. So you tell other people about it. Or if you find anything that you appreciate. I don't know, a TV show or a new drink or whatever you like.

You typically want to tell other people about it, don't you? You want to praise the creator of that thing. I don't know if you've been to an art gallery before. But it's pretty boring if you go by yourself. When you go and appreciate art, you want to take someone along with you that you can appreciate it with them. It's been said that we only find our full enjoyment of something when we praise it to another.

But how much more then, if we praise the ordinary things of life that we enjoy, how much more should we acknowledge and praise God when we see and enjoy his amazing works that are around us every day?

Considering God's work should lead us to praise. And that's what it does for David. But that's not all it does. You see, David goes on, as he's just meditating on these works, he goes on to consider something else.

[9 : 51] Namely, in light of all these incredible things that God has made, David thinks, why on earth should God care for us, humans? See verse 3, When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them?

Human beings that you care for them. It's a good question, isn't it? You know, we just take, again, we take for granted what God gives us. But have you ever stopped and thought, why does God give it to us?

Why does God sustain us at all? Why does he care? Why does God give it to us?

That we see, billions of them, that we see in the sky, full of stars. All of those stars that we see are only part of one galaxy. And astronomers estimate there are over 100 billion other galaxies in the universe beyond what we can see.

You know, when you compare us, human beings, to all that God has made, and the enormity of it, it should cause you to wonder too, why does God give us any attention whatsoever?

[11 : 22] And yet he does. He gives humans attention. To him, we are somehow important. To God, the creator of all of this.

The reason for that is in this psalm. You see, because this psalm goes on to tell us that we have a special place in God's plans.

Unlike any other thing that he's created, humans have a very special place in God's plans for this universe. So, look at verse 4.

What is mankind that you are mindful of them? Human beings that you care for them? Well, here's the answer. You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.

You made them rulers over the works of your hands. You put everything under their feet. All flocks and herds and animals of the wild. The birds in the sky. The fish in the sea. All that swim in the paths of the seas.

[12 : 20] So, not only is God a worker who made and sustains this creation, but he made humans specially for the purpose of ruling over that creation that he made.

To manage and care for what he has made. God gave us a very special place in this created order because he made us to be workers under him.

See, when God made the world and the first humans in Eden, everything was raw and untouched and wild. This world was made when God established those humans. The world was made and the jungles in South America existed and the mountain peaks in Tibet existed.

But no one had been there yet. It was all just raw and untouched. And then God gave humans the job to tame the world. To go out and to cultivate it and to explore it and to go further and to see what they could find.

You see, God never intended for people to stay in Eden. But to spread and to travel and to build settlements and to build towns and to build cities.

[13 : 35] And to build things to get around from town to town like wagons and eventually cars and planes and submarines. You see, that's why God gave us special abilities of invention that the animals don't have.

That's why you don't ever see lions riding around on bicycles in the Kruger. Because only humans are able to invent something like that. And the reason is because God enabled us to invent things like that.

God gave us the ability to work like he worked. Us alone. In a way animals can't. To organize and to create like God does. And so, you know, the work that humans do in creating new things and designing an art and stuff.

You can consider really just extensions of God's work of creation. Because if he gave us the ability to design and to do art and things. Then it really, that's still his creation just through us.

It means, in a sense, that a Ferrari is just as much a part of God's creation as a snowflake or a flower or a waterfall or a tree. We only have the ability to design things because God gave us that ability.

[14 : 46] So, next time you see a Ferrari, feel free to say, Praise God! What a great, beautiful car that is. What a great expression of God's creativity through human beings.

Of course, just be careful not to covet it when you do that. But you can praise God for the beautiful things in this world. Even the things that people create. But, you know, other than creating Ferraris, even our other more mundane abilities like managing accounts or transporting goods or learning and disseminating knowledge, whatever job you do are all abilities that God gave us to manage this world for him.

To put it another way, whatever you do, your work, no matter how mundane you think it is, is an outworking of your role as a steward of creation, which God enabled you to do for his glory and for his purposes.

Now, it's all very nice to think this way about work, but this doesn't really ring true for most of our experiences, does it? Our daily work doesn't seem to have the glory and honor that David talks about here.

We don't feel like the stewards of creation when we're crunching numbers on an Excel spreadsheet or cleaning a toilet. Work doesn't feel honorable. Much of the time it feels tiring and laborious.

[16 : 12] Work is a labor for us in this world. But you know what? As with everything else, the Bible tells us why that is.

The Bible here in Psalm 8, it reminds us what work is meant to be, but it also tells us why it's not that. And the reason is because of sin, of course. Sin has spoiled our work.

Because of us turning away from God and his intentions for us, and using, as humanity, we took all the skills that he gave us to manage this world for him, and we used those skills for ourselves instead.

And that's why part of the original curse of sin in Genesis, after mankind fell into sin, was a curse of work.

You'll remember from Genesis 3? Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

[17 : 14] By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food, until you return to the ground, since from it you were taking, for dust you are, and to dust you will return. You see, this is the result of sin.

This is the result of us, as humanity at large, turning away from God and following our own desires and plans. When we sinned, not only did death enter our world, but our work became frustrated. It was no longer the honor and joy that God intended for it to be to us. And the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, which Alan read for us earlier, explains this.

In fact, I don't know if you noticed when you were listening to those readings, but Hebrews quotes directly from Psalm 8. But it adds something quite important at the end.

So from Hebrews 2.6 it quotes the Psalm. It says, What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels. You crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet.

[18 : 15] But then it goes on to say this in verse 8. In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present, we do not see everything subject to them.

So you see, God's plan is that humans would rule creation under him gloriously. But at present, we don't see that, do we? What we see when we look around in this world is humans using the world's resources for ourselves and for our own advancement.

But because of sin, we can't really manage and care for the resources of the world like we're supposed to. And so it leads to inequality and poverty and war because we fight over limited resources that we can't manage well.

And that is why the world is messed up. As you'll hear time and time again from this pulpit, the world is the way it is because of sin. But work is the way it is because of sin as well.

But thankfully, that's not the end of the story. Because listen to how Hebrews goes on. It says, Okay, so we don't see humans being who we're meant to be.

[19 : 48] But what do we see? We see Jesus who came to be the perfect human being that we were meant to be on our behalf, for us.

And not only that, we see Jesus who came to take our place and died the death that we were supposed to die for sin so that we can be saved by trusting in him and so that we can become again the humans that God intends for us to be.

Which starts in this life as he slowly works on us and sanctifies us to transform us into the image of Christ. But it ultimately is in eternity that God has a plan to make us back into the people that he originally intended for us to be through Jesus Christ who came to be that person for us.

That's why we make such a big deal about Jesus here at this church. That's why you will hear about Jesus every single time you come here because he is the only way we could ever be the people we were meant to be.

He came to save us. And that's why the letter to the Corinthians describes Jesus after he rose from the dead describes him as a first fruit.

[21 : 05] In other words, he's the prototype of a new humanity. A new restored humanity. And so I hope you see that if you believe in Jesus that doesn't just mean that we get to go to heaven one day.

It means so much more than that. If we believe in Jesus it means that we will be restored back into our positions as the stewards of creation and not this broken creation a new redeemed creation that will last forever with no sin or death or brokenness.

Which also means that there will be work to do in heaven but not the labor and the toil of this work. It's work that we will love to do and that we'll never tire of and it'll never be a labor and we will sing on our way to work I bet you.

You see if you trust in Christ that is your destiny. To be restored as a steward of a new creation where your work will be honorable and glorious and important significant if you trust in Christ if his death counted for you but if you don't and I don't assume that everybody who comes to church has given their life to Jesus maybe you're still exploring maybe you're still wanting to learn about what you know what this is all about well I hope you see why it's so important to come to Jesus to put your trust in him to turn back to him to let him take control of your life to trust in his death on the cross for your sins because without that you will never be the person that God intended for you to be and created you to be.

it's through Jesus that we are redeemed that we are restored and that humanity is restored and if you trust in him your destiny is to help rule the new creation what an amazing hope that we have and you know what if that is you this morning if you do trust in Christ then the world is waiting for you creation is waiting for you listen to Romans 8 19 to 21 the creation is waiting in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed for the creation was subjected to frustration not by its own choice but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God and if you are one of those children of God through Jesus and that is your destiny then it will fundamentally change the way you look at your work on earth in the meantime for one you won't be as frustrated with your work on earth because you'll expect it to be frustrating this is a fallen world and work in this world will never be what it was ultimately meant to be but secondly despite that frustration if you're a child of God you'll want to work still to the best of your ability because you recognize God gave you those abilities for his glory and you work ultimately for him he is your boss that's why

[24 : 41] Colossians 3 23 says whatever you do work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord not for human masters when you go to work on Monday morning your real boss is not that guy sitting in that plush office complaining at your reports not being handed in on time your real boss is Jesus you work for him and when you realize that as a child of God you will want to work always for the best to the best of your ability because Jesus is the best boss you could ever have and then finally if you're a child of God you'll want to work in such a way that will point people to your hope you see if you anticipate the kind of excellent and joyful work that you will be doing in the world to come you'll want to start working like that now in everything you do as a signpost to those around you of what you'll be doing in eternity one day as a signpost to point other people to the kind of redeemed work that God calls you to

Titus 2 verse 10 instructs us as we go about our daily work in every way to make the teaching about God our Savior attractive and he means that in the context of daily work to your work and the way you do your work can make the teaching about God our Savior attractive to those around you your work itself and the attitude with which you approach it can be a powerful witness to the gospel and

no doubt lead to conversations where people will be asking you what's different about you why do you do you work differently why do you approach work differently and of course 1 Peter 3 15 says always be prepared to give an answer when people ask you for the hope that you have and how will they know that you have that hope if they don't see it come out in the way you live in the way you work and so in closing as you travel to work this week I don't expect you to sing like the seven dwarves necessarily feel free it's a very catchy tune but at least will you remember these great truths of

Psalm 8 as you go to work will you remember that God is a worker will you remember that he made you to be a worker under him and you want to work to the best of your ability looking forward to the great hope that you have of redeemed work in a new creation will you as you arrive at the office or the school or the factory or the warehouse or wherever you're going to work this week will you lift your eyes to the future and be ready to work as a steward of the coming new creation in such a way that will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive to those around you will you do that this week let's pray for God's help yes Lord we thank you for work first we we praise you for your work that it is because of your work that we can live and breathe and enjoy this world we thank you also for making us workers under you and giving us the ability to work

Lord we pray that you would help us to use that ability for your glory help us to work in such a way that highlights and magnifies you and as we do as we as we even though we face the frustrations of work would you help us to overcome those with the great hope of the work we will do in eternity and Lord would you change our attitudes to work so that as your children we would be shining lights in a dark world and that others would see and be attracted to the gospel through it we pray this and we need your help in this in Jesus name Amen