

WELCOME 6th September 2020 – 14 Pentecost '20 A

Mark 10:28-30 & Colossians 3:17-24

Welcome again this morning! Happy Father's Day! I'm glad you're here AND I pray you experience God's grace in this brief time together. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups & other important information about our ministry.

We're continuing with our adapted worship...so as usual there are Group Study/Discussion resources available on our website & in your hands. *If you're on-line I trust you'll make your way through the songs we've linked to this morning. We're also in the Guide Hall so you're experiencing here what we're experiencing there. Our aim is to equip you so your home becomes a place of the Spirit working leading you & those you've gathered in your homes into the fullness of God's word & his work in your lives & then out into the city to share what God has done for you.*

Remember all the great things we need to do to keep each other as safe as we can in this unending season of "the virus." Hand sanitizer. Masks if you want them. Sign in. Distance. We'll clean everything afterwards so...thank you but just leave it there...

As we move into this week... Hi! My name's John...and I'm a non-essential worker.

Or that's what the early pandemic panic-shutdown guidelines said. I understand. I don't wear a badge or wield a scalpel, but like so many others I do feed my kids & pay my bills...seems pretty "essential" to me & to those who benefit from my consistent income. And...on more than one occasion, those with badges & scalpels have called for me when their skills & capacities reached their limits...or when they understood the wider implications of a certain circumstance.

Of all the things that have changed in this SARS-Cov2 world in which we now live, perhaps our **work** has been affected most of all. But for followers of Jesus, that's the **ONE** thing hasn't changed at all: *"Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father...Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people."*

How do you thrive when your work is different? How do you find purpose & significance when your work-life encounters new terrain? As disciples we carry out our "work" knowing that in the ordinary stations of life to which we are called, God uses us to care for his creation. He works through us even when we don't realize it.

The very heart of our vocations, whatever calling we fulfill right now, **IS ESSENTIAL** because through it we are able to honour God and love & serve our neighbour. There is no higher calling than that.

We'll explore and experience that together... Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God of mercy and love, thank you for calling us into your presence. We praise you that you challenge us to show our faith in real ways in real life to the real people all around us. Open our hearts and minds today to hear your words of encouragement and challenge, and to hold tightly to your word of life, forgiveness and salvation...Jesus Christ our Lord...Amen.

Let's hear God's Word then we'll sing...

FAITH CHAT:

1. What is/was the best part of your "work"?
2. If you could encourage a young "worker," what would you tell them?
3. What is one thing that would revolutionize most workplaces?

(please don't say more \$\$\$)

BIBLES

14 Pentecost '20 A - *NEW TERRAIN: THRIVING IN LIFE'S CHANGES – THRIVING WHEN WORK IS DIFFERENT*

Let's keep thinking aloud...Do you believe most people work to live or live to work? What's the difference? Do you think "the virus" changed that? Many of you know I majored in Business Management in university. Of all the things I *DON'T* remember about my studies from all those years ago, I *DO* remember what we read from a guy named John Kotter I've likely talked about him ^{b/4}...He blew my mind then & still does because I don't think Kotter's a Christian... But he said this:

Every person needs 3 things to live fully & contentedly in this world... * Meaningful Work * Meaningful Relationships and * Purpose Larger than Themselves...One of those life lessons I reckon we often forget...we are *more than* what we do. Life is *more than* simply waking up & going to work. Basic to every human life, we need an identity & a connection to the world that is more all-encompassing than my job title. Martin Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Presby pastor/MD) once commented "...whole cemeteries could be filled with the sad tombstone: 'Born a man, died a doctor.'" Basic to every human life, we need an identity & a connection to the world that is more all-encompassing than my job title.

I love *Is 49:16* - *Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written (engraved) your name on the palms of my hands.* Our names...names...Not our accomplishments, not our failures, not our professions. Our names. John...Leonie Alf...Bec...each of us. Fundamental to human existence is that God has crafted us for himself & outside of that relationship to the Father there is a yawning gaping all-devouring chasm...but ^{w/in} those hands ^{w/in} that relationship there is a fullness unmatched, a completeness unsurpassed & an identity & a connection to the world that is more all-encompassing than my paycheck my CV can ever provide.

But what does that mean at your job where maybe no one else believes that? What does that mean now that I'm working from my dining table & no longer interact with my co-workers? What does that mean now that I'm retired & spend much of my day chasing someone else's kids or pretty much among other retired folks? Of all the things that have changed in this SARS-Cov2 world in which we now live, perhaps our work has been affected most. But for followers of Jesus, that's the *ONE* thing hasn't changed at all: *"Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father...Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people."*

The NT is pretty clear: Who I am empowers what I do. Just before the verses we have today, Paul writes, *Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, & patience. As someone loved claimed redeemed for God's purposes here...my life my work what I do with my waking hours is to take on the character of the One who has loved claimed & redeemed me. In the light of Christ's rescuing recreating love poured out for us, we become the conduit through which God makes that love visible accessible & real to someone else. Paul would write to the church in Rome: *If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.* – *Rom 14:8* All of who I am...all of what I do...is embraced in the greater Lordship of Jesus. And day by day in what we do as we live in this world, we bring the presence of Christ into ordinary moments to bless others...we become the conduit through which God makes his love visible/accessible/real to someone else*

Here's what we have to remember...it's awesome...Even though this world & all of us in it have rebelled against God's authority & turned our backs on God & our energies against him...God is still God. God is still sovereign *AND* God still loves this world & preserves & sustains all of us in it. How? Luther said God "hides himself" in human vocations. On the outside we see an ordinary human appearance: mother, father, Dr, police officer, farmer, teacher, pastor, student, nurse... but behind that human appearance, God cares for us through them. Even if that's not really what they're trying to do...God is going to care for his world & even the pagan businessperson whose only motive is profit & self-satisfaction, when they provide useful goods & services & employment to workers are being used by God. In the same way God uses imperfect parents to raise & nurture children & imperfect pastors to share his word & act as stewards of the Sacraments. God delivers his grace in earthen vessels, but that by no means diminishes their value or the holy importance of what they are made capable of doing by God.

As disciples we carry out our "work" knowing that in the ordinary stations of life to which we are called, God uses us to care for his creation. He works through us even when we don't realize it. The very heart of our vocations, whatever calling we fulfill right now, *IS ESSENTIAL* because through it we are able to honour God and love & serve our neighbour. There is no higher calling than that. Now here's how that works out in real life & I'm going to reflect this through the 2 sets of verses we read this morning. 1st - One of the dangers everyone faces in our working/non-working lives is that **success goes to our heads but failure goes to our hearts**. When our

work goes well we are convinced it's because we're so doggone smart & good at what we do. And we fool ourselves into believing that since we did it that time...we can do it every time. Pride & overconfident arrogance are real things. But when our work goes badly...it crushes us. Conversation with financial consultant this week... their take on this rolling unending shutdown...unemployment, under employment, \$\$ shortfalls with no real end in sight...are killing people who have no identity outside of what they produce They said there is an untold emotional weight crushing people who only know their value worth & importance through what they produce through their work. success goes to our heads but failure goes to our hearts **UNLESS** you are anchored in the greater reality/overarching truth that your value worth & importance are unassailable because your name is engraved on the Father's hand & you are loved chosen & redeemed by Christ & whatever you do you carry it out as an agent of Jesus whose rescuing saving love is being poured out through you. Who I am/you are empowers what I/you do.

2nd thing...In Mk's recount of Jesus' life, a man approaches Jesus wondering what he must "do" to gain eternal life. We know the story...He & Jesus go through the commandments & the guy's pretty impressed because he's done all that. *Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him* & notes he lacks 1 thing... "Go. Sell all your possessions. Give the money to the poor, & you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Of course that's a bridge too far & he goes away dejected. Jesus then explains to his followers that salvation is only accomplished by the power of God & lots of stuff inhibits our openness to that powerful saving grace.

Peter of course reminds Jesus that the disciples have given up "everything" to follow Jesus. Jesus says when you are so transformed by my love that everything about you is used as an channel of blessing to others...to bring God's grace to bear on someone else...you never really lose it...It's multiplied in the sharing. In offering your life to God in response to the grace you have received in Jesus you see your life & your work expanded – "King-sized" as you start to more & more reflect the life of the King who has claimed you as his own & holds for you a place of eternal love life joy & fullness greater than anything this world could give. Remember we said last week...& probably before that...if all I have is what I have get hoard hold on to...Then that's all I ever have. Guy walked away dejected because he knew what he really needed to feel whole complete satisfied "saved" was beyond his grasp & what was in his grasp was the problem. You see grace is not only pardon it is also power...grace not only saves it transforms & protects & defends & blesses...

Grace creates hope & assurance that my future is secured beyond my feeble grasping & holding.

But I want to finish w/ a reminder & an encouragement...I joke about the gov't telling me my work is "non-essential." Except it's not funny...It's hurtful to diminish the honourable labour/station of another person & we too often create a hierarchy of work. We exalt some & demean others...that's wrong. We know the difference b/t honourable labour & that which is corrupt or destructive...even if it's legal. I was listening to Pr Tim Keller in some online training awhile ago...& borrowing from Luther he noted that the job of a Xn pilot was to land the plane...smoothly...every time. If that pilot has a chance to talk about Jesus with the co-pilot, flight attendant or passenger...that's great & pilot should be ready to do that, but the 1st primary responsibility: Land. The. Plane. If you're a teacher, teach well; to the best of your capability. Pray for your students & colleagues & if you have opportunity share the hope w/in you...but 1st...teach well. However you spend the waking hours of your day...Let whatever you do each day becomes an act of faith that brings the presence of Christ into ordinary moments to bless others.

As disciples we carry out our "work" knowing that in the ordinary stations of life to which we are called, God uses us to care for his creation. He works through us even when we don't realize it. The very heart of our vocations, whatever calling we fulfill right now, **IS ESSENTIAL** because through it we are able to honour God and love & serve our neighbour. There is no higher calling than that.

Let's pray with that in mind: **Father you have claimed us for your work in this world. By your Spirit in us immerse the places we spend each day in your grace, that the world may see clearly your love for all people, trust deeply your saving gift in Jesus Christ, and rejoice greatly in your presence forever. In Jesus' Name we pray... Amen**