

Themes for a Growing Church

“We Consecrate Our Work So It Makes a Difference”

Matthew 25:34-40, Proverbs 22:29, I Corinthians 10:31

We have been praising God in music and song, particularly the song His Glory is my Good. This is my third in my final series on themes for a godly church, the church, and today its work. Some of you know, it's been a very long term interest of mine. I've never spoken in a sermon on work, and so I'm eager to do so. Mindful that we want to glorify God in all that we do, not just in song time. We do praise him with songs and in prayers, but in our work from day to day. So with that in mind, I want to read a few passages. They're not exactly what's in the bulletin. If I can give you a peek behind the curtain, I do turn in my sermon text in outline on Monday. but my sermon isn't always done on Monday, so I always say this could change. And, this week, it actually is changing and I'm going to be reading from Colossians 3:17 and then 22 and 23, and I Corinthians 10:31, and as the Bulletin says we'll be reading from Matthew 25, but a little bit later in the middle of the sermon. And so I'm going to ask you to, listen as I read God's Word, our theme for the year, you know, as a church is “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you” which means we seek God's reign in all of life. Sundays, Mondays, Fridays, at work and at play. We're not afraid of the world. We engage the world, engage the world, hoping to do God's work in the world. And these are passages that teach us about that. Hear God's word. Paul said,

“... whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

“Bond servants, obey your earthly masters in everything, not by way of our service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart pleasing. The Lord and fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord, and not for men”

“... whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.”

Let's pray for a moment.

Lord, give us, I pray, ears to hear all that you're saying to us. Give us your spirit so we can be bold and faithful to you, not just on Sundays, but Monday through Friday. We pray in Jesus name,

Amen. You may be seated.

I have a friend. He wants to keep his name anonymous. I'm going to call him Jonathan Bird. Jonathan is a man who transports grain. He's from the Midwest. And that's the thing you do in

the Midwest. He has a company that moves grain from the farms to the barges that take it to United States and all over the world. He has discerned ways to do it a little bit faster, a little bit better, a little more safely, less waste than anybody else in the world. And as a consequence, when he started, 4% of the grain that moved from America to the world came through Saint Louis. And now about 40% comes through Saint Louis. But he's good at other things.

There's a beloved spot called the City Museum, which is really for kids. It was about to go bankrupt, and he loves children. And he said, you know, I think I can turn it around. And it went from losing millions of dollars to being full and safe and profitable. And that museum's in a neighborhood that has a lot of grand old houses and the grand old buildings that were ignored because of urban developments and features of urban life today.

And he said, if I buy a number of them and they're in a cluster, not only will I get good value and restore these buildings, but we could revitalize the entire neighborhood. And that's happened. But one you might be most interested in is that he had a little company in 2019 that made about 150 ventilators per month. Ventilators a few months later became very important during Covid, when people were dying out of the early stage, lung collapses and suffocation. And somehow it's a long story. He took his little company from making 150 a month to making 10,000 a month, and it became the world's leading supplier of ventilators. Jonathan has been a Christian for a few years, a little bit less than a decade. He's about my age. So he came to the Lord late in life. And even though he's done all these things, he is prone, like so very many Christians, when we talk about his work to say, I just those two words, I just I just moved grain a little bit better than anybody else. I just see opportunities somehow that nobody else can see. I just as a pastor, I have had innumerable conversations with people who talk about their work, and they start with those two words. I just I talk about it with stay at home parents, especially stay at home moms, because they stay home a little more than dads do to take care of children. And they say things like, I just wipe noses and change diapers and keep children from squabbling all day. I don't know what I'm doing. What am I going to say when I want to go back to work after 12 years? A gigantic gap in my resume. Nobody's going to want to hire me again. I just take care of children. So I made up a title for mothers or fathers who stay at home with their kids. And here it is. You don't watch children. You are a polytropic. Polytropic, pre of asset. Human resource development specialist. Now, if you wonder what that means, polytropic is a plant, a Greek word that means in many places. Polytropic means in many ways. Rejuvenation is a word I made up. It just means people aren't juveniles yet. And then the rest of it makes sense.

And I say it, it's kind of a joke, but it's actually dead serious. I say to mothers who are staying home with their kids, what could be more potent? What could be more valuable? What could have greater significance for time and eternity? For this life and eternity? Then taking care of a

little child, teaching them the ways of the Lord, teaching the ways of kindness and decency and learning how to work and learning about their skills and developing their skills.

Learning how to read. What could be better than that? A life that will begin today and last forever. But people say I just they say I just for many reasons. I've been hearing it for years. Educators say I just teach math. Doctors and nurse practitioners say I just write prescriptions. I don't know if any will take them or not.

Entertainers say I just make people laugh for a few minutes. Why do people say I just a variety of reasons. Some people say it because they are humble, which is good. Others say it because they want to seem to be humble, which is not quite as good. Other people say just because they never hear well done, because they can't see the value of their work, because nobody else tells you about it.

They say I just because they are only good at a handful of things because they work on an assembly line, they don't see the value of everything that happens on that assembly line. They just put a screw on. They don't realize they're part of a process that makes a car or they can't see it. Or they say I just because they are just working for money or just doing what they're told or never lift their eyes.

Or maybe they realize that their work has very little value, maybe even worthless, maybe worse than worthless. Maybe they're promoting gambling or marijuana usage. People say I just for many reasons. Our passage tells us that at least we as believers should always say, I am doing this for the sake of my King. I'm doing this to the glory of God.

I'm working heartily to bring glory to God. I am seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, not just on Sundays, not just in our home life or in our neighborhood, but also Monday to Friday or Saturday in the workplace. Whatever we do in word or deed, do it in the name of Jesus. Work heartily as to the Lord and not for men.

That's what the Bible says. So work to the glory of God. Now some of you are thinking, that's interesting. I'm eight years old, I don't work or I'm 88 years old. I don't work anymore. Now I want to tell you that there's a man named David Miller who wrote an Oxford University wonderful book about work. He's a believer, and he gave a different definition of work that eight year olds and 88 year olds need to have in mind.

It's up here in our screen in a second. Work is the sustained exercise of skill and strength that overcomes obstacles to produce or accomplish something. Now, what that means is work is not dabbling. It is a sustained exercise of skill and strength, which means that an eight year old, in fact, is working when he or she learns to read or learns how to, as they used to say, cipher to do math or when they learn geography.

You are working. When you are learning to read, you are working. When you're learning to play the piano or learning to play sports. Acquiring skill. Retired people can and should work. They should work hard at being wise volunteers. They should not dabble in works of mercy and give it 30 minutes a year. They should give it a sustained exercise of their skill and strength, probably skills and strengths they developed in a lifetime of working for pay.

And now they're working unpaid. But it's still work. Making meals, washing cars. It's all work. Whether you're paid for it or not. And so we need to have what I want to call five big ideas in the Bible about work, to organize our thoughts so we can stop saying, I just and start saying, I do this for the kingdom of God and do it for the glory of God.

The first big idea is that work is actually good. Now there's a myth. The myth is work is a curse that God blighted humanity punished humanity by telling us we had to work. And if we want to undo the curse, what we should do is work as little as possible. And through our work on the animals long ago, or slaves and slave cultures, or on machines today, or give it to AI if we possibly can.

And the Bible says work is good. God is a worker. God is a king. He's a shepherd. He's a potter. God works. And he made us in his image and therefore we work. Now in the beginning God said to Adam and Eve, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and exercise dominion over it, meaning rule it. I don't know about you, but every time I've had dominion over anything, it's involved.

Work. And lest somebody think dominion sounds like domination or exploitation, just a few verses later, chapter two, God says to Adam, I want you to tend the garden and keep it or guard it. It could be translated, guard it and protect it. We're not exploiting the world. We're caring for the world. When we desire to fix things that are broken, we're actually echoing the very nature of God Himself, who looked at this world that was broken by sin and said, I'm going to fix that.

When we have a desire to finish a project instead of starting a project, we're reflecting the work of Jesus, who on the cross, as you know, said a variety of things, and one of them is it is finished. He finished the work of redemption. That is why, because we're made in God's image. We want to work. We want to solve problems, and we want to finish them, because that is the way of the Lord himself is a blessing to end the day and say, I finished what I wanted to do today.

God is pleased when we say that. Now, of course, of course, the curse has touched work. Every job has misery and every job you have to take out the garbage. There are details that we don't like. I remember a line from Jerry Seinfeld. He said, I will spend an hour to take one word out of a joke.

Now I have to tell you, it's toilsome to work for an hour to get rid of one word. There's toil, there's misery, there's sin. But work is good. Number one. Number two. God has done

something to help us escape from, the tyranny of work. And that is, he said, there's a pattern for work, and it is that we should work.

Six days. Six days. You shall labor and do all your work. Seven days a Sabbath, the Lord your God. Now, most people are either working too much or working too little. I asked groups how many? If you're working too much, if there's 100 people, probably 55. And especially Presbyterians who are prone to overwork, for sure 55 are going to say I work too much and 35 we're going to say, I don't work enough, and about 10% will say, I work the right amount.

God says, work six days, not work for pay six days, but work six days. And that's a good rebuke for those who are lazy. And he says, rest one. And that's a good rebuke for those who are workaholics. Never know how to stop. And why do we stop? We stop so we can so we can act as God Himself did.

What did God do after created the world? He said, it's good. It's very good. God himself reflects on what he's done, and we also need to reflect on what we've done. We have to not just do the next thing that's in front of us all the time, but reflect on questions like, am I using my gifts, my talents, my abilities to the best of my ability?

Glorify God and love my neighbors myself? On the Lord's Day, we ponder, have I been as faithful as I would like? And we also look to the future. What my God have for me next? We aren't just working machines. The third thing that the Word of God tells us is that manual labor and mental labor are both blessed.

Now, I know that in, circles, in churches that have lots of people that are professionals, like this church, there tends to be some kind of a, a view that that working with their hands is second rate. Oh, of course we work with our hands. You know, we were, when we were young, we scrub pots and we washed dishes.

We were a restaurant, we bused tables and so forth. But that's long past. I don't do that anymore. And we can possibly look down on people, maybe even our friends who work with their hands. And that's a serious mistake, because Jesus himself is called. In the Bible we say a carpenter, but the Greek word is tekton, which from which we get words like technique and technician.

It means he worked with his hands on materials, he worked on wood. But a tekton could also work with stone and metal. Jesus worked with his hands. The Apostle Paul worked with his hands and said, working with our hands is good. But of course Paul and Jesus both taught. So mental work is good, all kinds of work, all honest work is good.

And we can consecrate our work, whether a plumbers or electricians or financiers or medical personnel.

And God calls everyone to this. There's a myth out there that says the person who really serves God is a missionary. Next to that, of course, maybe pastors and maybe Christian school teachers. Next. And then there's of course there's teachers and there's healers of various stripes. But after that, we're not quite sure. And there's reason to be unsure if you're working in the gambling industry.

I have this word for you find another job. It's not good work. You're defrauding people. They're money. You're not. You're not giving them anything back. You're just taking their money. And if you're doing something illegal or illicit or damaging to people, please stop doing that. But anybody who does honest labor that shows love of neighbor that does good to a neighbor can serve God.

You can get up in the morning and say, Lord, thy kingdom come, thy will be done through my hands today. It may be an obscure job, but if you can stand up in the morning and say, Lord, I dedicate my labors to you, then it's probably good work. Through our work we become the hands and feet of God, right through our hands, through our minds, we answer the legitimate prayers of God's people.

When we pray in the morning, you're apt to pray the Lord's Prayer.

One of the Lord's Prayer elements is give us this day our daily bread, and God summons farmers to get up in the morning and tend their fields. Before that, there were people who created farming implements by the way. There may be even be real estate agents who helped the property get into the right hands. And then there are people who harvest and they make the harvesting machines.

And then then people take the grain or the fruit in a helpful way, without waste to the places where it's gathered. And then disseminated. It goes to the stores and it's put on the shelves and then it's taken down. And as a check out, man or woman, all this is part of the enterprise of answering the prayer.

Give us this day our daily bread. Or if you pray, if you're going to travel, most of you are this summer for a vacation of some kind. You may pray, Lord, give us, give us safety on the road. Well, how does that happen? It happens through engineers, aeronautical engineers, and automotive engineers who make cars and planes that don't crash.

And then the mechanics take care of them. They're answering the legitimate prayers of God's people, even if they're unchristian. But certainly Christians should know that if you're in these fields of transportation, of safety, you're doing God's work. And that is why we can offer our work to the Lord. And it can be all kinds of work. I have a friend who lives in Chicago who makes plastic molds, and I say, what does that mean?

He said, well, you know, a lot of things that you use start in some way or other in my manufacturing facility, my tool and die makers. I said, really tool? And I yeah, you know, with plastics, it's kind of hard to do. I said give me an example. He said, well, ketchup bottles. Now, I don't know how many of you have a love hate relationship with ketchup bottles.

Anybody with me on this? Have you had a ketchup bottle? And you're shaking it. You're beating it or squeezing it and it just will not come out. And then you beat it a little bit more and it all comes out and you have 12oz of ketchup on 11 French fries. He said, I'm the guy who keeps that from happening.

I'm the guy who makes better ketchup bottle nozzles. He said, I don't even do that. I just make the mold that people use. But I need you to know. I'm doing it so people have a better time in restaurants and at their homes. He's a Christian. I'm doing it to the glory of God. We can do anything. It's honest.

Any legitimate work for God's glory, for his praise, seeking the kingdom. And here's why. Work is the chief place where we have training and skill and teamwork, where we have concentrated research resources we spend the most time and most energy doing what is good to our neighbor. We are our brother's keeper. We love our neighbor as ourselves and offering it to the Lord himself.

This is what Jesus said about it in Matthew 25. Then the King, that's Jesus. This is Jesus speaking about the last things, about the last day. Then the King will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, you gave me drink.

I was a stranger. You're welcome. Me? I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. And then listen to what happens next. The righteous who are being invited to come with the King into eternal glory. The righteous will say, we don't remember doing that. We don't know what you're talking about.

We didn't recognize the good work we were doing. We didn't see work your way. That's my paraphrase. Here's what Jesus said. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed your thirsty and give you drink? When, when do we see you a stranger and welcome you are naked and clothe you? When do we see you sick or in prison and visit you?

And Jesus will answer. The King will answer, truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. That is, as you did it to the most insignificant person customer in your life as you did it for a little child who didn't even say thank you as you did it for the least, not as you did it for the king or the leader as you did it for the least.

You did it for me. Now, what that means concretely is that if you have any role in these fields, these enterprises, if you have any role that brings food to the hungry, driving a truck, serving as a cashier.

Helping the right farmer get the right land. Real estate leasing any role. The Lord is pleased he sees it. He smiles. If you have any role in getting water from rivers and lakes into people's mouths, into their homes, the Lord sees it and is pleased. If you have any role in medical care, I don't mean just surgeons or primary care or nurses.

I mean the person who answers the phone at the doctor's office and does billing and makes schedules. If you have any role in bringing health, in taking care of the lonely, the needy, the poorest of the poor, criminals, even the Lord says he is pleased. I was in prison and you visited me. It's not always exciting. It isn't always exciting.

Our culture says our work should be self fulfilling and the Bible is not against fulfillment. The Bible is not against actualization. I have a passage right here in front of me. It's from Deuteronomy chapter 16. The Lord will bless you in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete. We should enjoy our work, but that's not the number one concern in the Bible.

The number one concern is love your neighbor, glorify God. And we can do that even though we don't see it. You know the math teacher who's teaching a class and he's got who knows how many boys and girls, ninth grade algebra, eighth grade algebra, and they are apparently paying no attention whatsoever. They're they do have a pen in their hands.

But when he wanders over, he sees that they're drawing pictures of each other. They're not taking math notes. And so the question is, my teaching these students anything but the truth of the matter is that that math teacher may, in 25 years, drive over a bridge that was designed by one of those kids. It happens. Let me say it this way.

When I was in fourth grade, I was, one of the people that my wife who taught grade school for 16 years, called the Naughty Boys. I led my class the entire fourth grade class in being put out in the hallway nine times. That was put out in the hall. Yes, I still remember. I was not the worst kid in my class.

There was one kid. If you put him out in the hallway, he would have run through the halls screaming, looking for gasoline and matches. I stood there, sat there and bore my punishment. And 16 years later I was in grad school and one of my professor was giving a very lengthy answer to a very uninteresting question. And so I decided to write a letter to my fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Wolff.

This is what I wrote. Dear Mrs. Wolff, you taught me in fourth grade and I caused you endless grief. I didn't listen because I was trying to make everyone around me laugh. You moved me

away from my friends and put me in the back left corner, surrounded by three girls who would not speak under any circumstances. You scolded me for wasting my potential. You punish me by giving me C's I did not deserve on my report card. You made my naughtiness miserable and I write to thank you for it. Because my family moved after fourth grade and in fifth grade, I didn't know anybody. I was afraid to be naughty and I accidentally got straight A's and the pain was gone and it felt so good to stop being scolded and to stop being put in the hall that I've kept it up ever since. I'll be getting my PhD in a couple of years. Thank you, thank you.

I got a letter back a month later. The letter said, thank you for writing. Mr. Doriani and Mrs. Wolff would have been glad to read your letter. she died a month ago, and I thought, you know, she never knew.

But then I thought she was teaching me in the day. When did it just become illegal to read the Bible and pray in classes in public school? Where I went was the only place to go, and it was illegal. But she read the Bible and prayed with us every day. So I'm thinking maybe she does know. Maybe the Lord told her about those kids that seem to be getting nothing out of her class, but she actually did make a difference in their life.

I'm guessing that she prayed, Lord, give me strength with these naughty boys. Lord, help me break through with these kids. And the Lord answered a prayer. See, we have an idea that when we go to work, the most exciting, the most valuable, the best thing we can do is to, be kind to the people around us. So kind.

So kind. In fact, that, don't just really like us and maybe we can share our faith with them. Now. Hear me? Well, we should be kind. We should share our faith with the people around us at work. Absolutely, absolutely. And if your niceness makes you credible, which it tends to do, you know, when we're nice and kind and work hard with skill, when we're one of the best members of the team, and you think, I want to talk about Jesus?

People are probably much more willing to listen to you, and they're much more willing to listen. If you've worked with skill and dedication, you're a valued member of the team. So let's work and offer whatever we do to the Lord so that when it comes time for us to articulate our faith, they're going to say, I'm all ears.

And if they still if they don't say those words, I'm all ears. You're still glorifying God with your work. Whatever it is. Making molds for ketchup bottles, for example, or driving a bread truck, for example. Now I want to talk for just a couple of minutes, maybe seven minutes, something like that to leaders. And I've been mentioning ordinary work a lot of the time, but some of you have been given a gift or gifts and opportunities for training and mentorship, and you're now in a leadership position.

And people often will say, kind of naively, when they're young, I want to change the world. And then when we're older, we give up on it. But I think it's better to say something like this if God has given you a leadership position, maybe you can change your corner of the world that that spot, that realm where you have maybe a thousand, maybe 100, maybe ten, maybe four people under your authority.

You have a project, you have a vision, you see something, maybe a physician or a researcher knows about a promising form of medical care, and it should work. But it doesn't. And you dig into it and you have a lab or you have you have a position that allows you to do research. And maybe you have people under you and you have a budget and you can toilet these things, and you have a principle that you want to put into practice.

As a man named Robin, John, who was a Christian from India that I've gotten to know in the last couple of months, he founded a company called Eventide. If you know a lot about churchy things, you might know that Eventide is a term that the Anglican Church uses for evening services. And that's deliberate. something happened to him early in his career.

He quickly rose in his firm, a very young man, and he saw something in his firm that was a tremendous injustice to a couple of workers. And he tried to fix and he couldn't. And so he said, you know, I'm going to go and business for myself now. Eventide is a Boston based virtue investment firm. Some people laugh at virtue based investing.

He doesn't. He's got \$7 billion under his, company's umbrella. It's listed in Morningstar. If you care about these things and he says, I'm looking for opportunities to work for the common good now that that phrase has been adopted by our culture, but it actually comes from first Corinthians 12 seven. Use your gifts for the common good.

That's what Paul says. That little phrase has entered American parlance. Praise God for that. And he invests in companies that are what he says he construed, and his team Christians, as clearly virtuous. So what does that mean? Well, he said, I'll give you the, I'll tell you. For example, we don't invest in a firm that promotes tobacco use or gambling or alcohol or a board of patient medications.

I said, good call. I'm with you on that. Those are the easy ones. Tell me, is that the limit? I mean, you'll invest in anything else. He said, I do not thank you for asking, but, yeah, we don't invest in companies that make weapons or munitions or sugary beverages or junk food that's hyper processed and, and, and fat laden.

We don't invest in herbicides. I said, come on, round up everybody needs roundup. You got to be kidding me. Here. He said, no, no video games. We don't invest in those either. I said, are you saying that video games and herbicides and Coca-Cola are evil? He said, I'm not saying that. I'm saying it's not clearly good. And there's so many firms that are clear, really good.

There are thousands and thousands of firms that are clearly good. We're just going to invest in those. And I said, so if you can't invest in Sun Chips and Cheetos and Coca-Cola, doesn't that, you know, aren't those big markup and profitable companies, he said. They are. But our returns are essentially identical to everybody else's returns. So we're not you're not gonna lose any money.

You're not going to gain money, you're not going to lose money. So why not invest in firms that you want to invest in? I had a hard time arguing with that. That seemed right. And that's his decision. And he's in a leadership spot. But what he's doing is saying, I'm going to put my faith to work from the ground up.

But in other words, a lot of companies and there are many reasons I'm not condemning people for this, but a lot of companies are run by Christians do absolutely everything the same way everybody else does. They make cars or planes or ketchup bottles the way everybody else does, he said. We're going to do this. This investment enterprise from the ground up.

We're going to pour it in everything we do. And I said, okay, tell me this. What happens if a company looks really good somehow makes you wonder? He said, good question. we were recently investing in a solar power firm. Seem good. Save good for the environment. And then we have we have a compliance group. And they started looking into something.

And they found that some of the chips and some of the coatings that are used for their solar panels are assembled in China. And we dig dug a little bit more, and we found that it was done in that part of China that enslaves the ethnic minority, the Uyghur people. And so we divested because we couldn't get away from the slavery.

Now, do we have everything perfect? Of course not. Of course we're going to find other things. But from day one, they're praying. They're seeking the Lord. They want to glorify God. They want to love their neighbor, and they're trying to build their faith into their work. And many of you can do something similar. You may not own your own company.

You may not be the CFO, CEO, CIO, CEO, or any other o word c anything o abbreviation. But a lot of us have informal leadership. That is to say, when a question comes up, people say, we are going to talk to Ken because people listen to what Ken has to say. We're going to listen to Barb because people listen to Barb, and you can have formal authority of a title or rank and a spot on the org chart, but you can also have informal authority, and if you have it, then use it.

And don't despair. People sometimes have this idea that the world is so complex, there's so much evil that it's just about impossible to do anything that really glorifies God and work. So here's another conversation I had when I was talking about this. Somebody said to me once, so are you telling me that I make, you know, I work at a restaurant, eat that.

There's a Christian way to make a baked potato and a Christian way to make a French fry and a hamburger. Another person said to me, you tell me is a Christian way to make a light bulb? I mean, we know how you make light bulbs, there's no doubt about it. Where does it exactly the same. And I said, are you sure?

Because you see, in a restaurant, when you're making baked potatoes or you're making French fries, you can either be hands on or hands off to the personal good of your workers. Everybody knows that restaurant life often means you get done working. 11 and when people get done working at 11 and go out later on, they often end up doing things that are not helpful to them, like drinking and so forth.

And are you hands off? Or do you play a fatherly role and try to coach your workers, or maybe get them off at 10 or 1030 so that are exhausted, and then go out and get into the restaurant life? And by the way, you know, a good man, a godly man, Proverbs says, takes care of the life of its beast.

And I'm not against slaughtering cows and having hamburgers, but are you mindful for the sourcing of your hamburger meat? You care do not care. Do you care about the humane, proper treatment of animals or not? And light bulbs you know they take in or car batteries taking materials from all over the world? Do you care about how the people who mined those materials are treated?

Do you care about the environmental effects of your manufacturing operation? So light bulbs a light bulb is a light bulb. But some people care about the people who give you the materials and others don't. And so you can make a difference in your part of the world. I'm not saying it's easy. I'm saying it can be done. We pray, say, Lord, teach me the way.

Show me your way. Enable me to serve you, to offer my work to you day by day. Now there is one more thing I need to say. And the one more thing is, is pretty different. The pretty different thing is if you're hard working and so many people in this church are praise God, if you're hardworking and you're talented, God's given you a lot of ability.

He's given you gifts. He's given you training. You want to use it to serve the world. You want to serve your neighbor. You want to glorify God. There is another danger, and that is you work so hard at your work. The work slowly becomes an alternate deity for you, and you begin to care about your work so much that it squeezes out family and it squeezes out Lord himself, whom you're trying to please, and you just work and work and work on your project without pausing and thinking and evaluating it.

Next week, Lord willing, I'll be in acts chapter 20 with you and there's a big uproar in acts 19 and 20 over Artemis, who is the God of the Ephesians. Artemis was essentially a goddess of prosperity. And Paul came along and said, this is no God. And so many people became

Christians in Ephesus when he was there for three years, that the people who made silver images of the God were losing their jobs.

And there was a riot about it, and they were furious at Paul for ruining their. Activities, worshiping God who gave them prosperity. They loved their prosperity. And we can love our prosperity if we're not careful. Why did Jesus say you cannot serve both God and money? You cannot serve both God and man. And except because we can end up serving whether we mean to or not, serving our career, our money, our mammon.

Thinking with terror about the day we would retire with terror, about the loss of our job because it's taking up too much space in our life. There's only one God, the true God, that deserves that central place in our life. So I urge you, exhort you, I plead with your brothers, serve the Lord and all that you do.

Sisters, serve the Lord, glorify God, pray at the beginning today, Lord, enable me to serve you, to love you, to glorify you, and teach me how to lay it down, lest my work become too much. I want to love you through my work. Let's pray for a minute. Heavenly father, I pray you would give us the wisdom to see what you say about work, the heart to want to glorify you with our work, with our mouths, and with our hands.

That we would pray over our work. Consecrate our work to you day by day. And yet, Lord, even for those of us who've learned to do that and perhaps care about it a little too much, may you reveal to us our idolatrous tendencies and call us back to love you first and last and most. Oh Lord, our rock and our Redeemer.

Amen.