

FOUNDATIONS FOR
LAITY RENEWAL

Transforming Daily Life

719 Earl Garrett Street
Kerrville, TX 78028

Three Sermon Outlines on

Work and Faith

Seeing the Good Side of Work

Rob Carmack

SERMON NOTES

*The
High Calling
of Our
Daily Work*

*Making a real living connects you to a bigger picture,
a grand design, an abundant life.*

*Each of us has only a small part to play, but what a part!
It's the high calling of our daily work.*

– Howard Butt, Jr., of Laity Lodge
TheHighCalling.org

Seeing the Good Side of Work

Introduction to the sermon series on *Seeing the Good Side of Work*

Many people feel that their jobs are tedious and dull. They have no real sense of purpose or higher value as it relates to their daily work. They sit in front of their computer monitors for hours on end, they wait until Friday mercifully arrives, and they dread Monday morning when they will have to return to their pointless existences.

This is not the way life was meant to be. We do not have to live this way. We were created for work, not as a punishment, but as a way to tap into our God-given nature. We work because it gives us the opportunity to engage something bigger than ourselves. Work is good, and we were meant to work with enthusiasm and vision.

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Sermon 3: Work and the Reign of God

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Theological Point: God honors those who seek to help and to serve others.

Introduction: Work Should Never Be Motivated by Selfishness

A. We Must Be Concerned With the Well-Being of Others

B. We Have Power to Help

C. My Work Must Reflect the Heart of God

Conclusion: Seek Out Opportunities to Make a Difference in the World

Introduction: The concept of work has become something quite small for so many people. Work, we tend to think, exists so that we can make more money and have nice things and provide resources for our next family vacation. While there is nothing wrong with any of these things, perhaps the idea of work should be something much bigger. Perhaps we should see work not only as something we do to provide for ourselves but as something that can have a positive impact on more people than we think.

In the book of Philippians, Paul expresses the importance of focusing our attention on more than just ourselves: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Phil. 2:3-4). If our work is motivated by selfishness or is approached by a sense of indifference to others, there is a crucial missing piece, not only in our work but also in our own spiritual selves.

This will result in a major paradigm shift for some. The dominant view of work is that it purely serves a function of self-preservation: “When I work, I get paid. When I get paid, I am empowered to survive.” While we do not ignore this function—we do not want to neglect our own needs or the needs of those who depend on us—this should not be the standard we set for ourselves. We should see work as an opportunity to represent the God we serve in our communities in ways that local churches would be less capable of doing.

As we consider this shift in our perception of work, we will explore three theological observations that will perhaps shed even more light on our sacred calling not only to work, but to “look to the interests of others.”

A. We Must Be Concerned With the Well-Being of Others. First of all, we must be confident that our work is not doing direct harm to others. This is an extreme example, but a professional hit man working for the mafia would have no way of working for the benefit of others. He would simply have to find a new line of work. In the same (yet far less dramatic) way, some of us are in work situations in which we are bringing harm to others. If my job involves stealing ideas from competing companies or other regular acts of ethical compromise, I have a genuine dilemma. My work is not serving the benefit of others (with the exception of my corrupt employers), and I am not representing Christ with my work. The kind of work that benefits others is a loving, just, and merciful expression of the character of Jesus Christ. Look at the words of the Proverbs: “One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God’s blessing on the one who is willing to sell” (Prov. 11:24-26).

The companies I admire most (and am most eager to give my money to) are the ones that seem to reflect this principle. One corporation that makes for an easy example is TOMS Shoes. This is a shoe company, but it is also so much more. TOMS employees make shoes, and their work directly goes to providing shoes to children in impoverished parts of the world. Every pair of shoes sold is a pair of shoes donated to a child. This is an example of work that “looks to the interests of others.”

The question becomes, “How can I do this in my own situation?” Perhaps it involves listening to the ideas of people who are often overlooked. Perhaps this involves giving other people credit for their contribution in your work. Perhaps it involves finding ways to partner with ministries and organizations in your community that help those who have been marginalized. One organization that I am familiar with provides days off for their employees to work for service organizations like Habitat for Humanity and various food pantries. These are not sick days or vacation days. They are days that are specifically provided so this organization can build a reputation for being concerned about the well-being of the people who live in their community.

B. We Have Power to Help. Most people do not realize how much power they possess. We feel as if the only people in our companies that can actually make any discernable difference are the men and women with the big offices and high salaries. This is untrue. We all have tremendous power; we simply must learn to recognize it and leverage it for the benefit of others. In Micah 6:8, we are told that the LORD requires us to “act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly” with God. If this is required of us, it must first be something that we are capable of doing. You have more power than you could possibly realize.

C. My Work Must Reflect the Heart of God. Ultimately, this is the core issue. The idea of serving and helping others is not to alleviate some sense of social guilt, and it is not to make our companies seem like nice enough folks. No, our ultimate task is to reflect and honor the nature of our God. In Matthew 25, Jesus gives his followers an interesting view of the end of reality as we know it and how we will be held accountable for our actions:

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’ ” (Matt. 25:34-40).

For Jesus, God’s heart is directly connected to the kinds of people who have very little power and influence and privileges. As we seek to reflect the heart of God in our work, we must constantly be aware of how our daily tasks can either positively or negatively affect other people. We must be aware of the well-being of our coworkers, our customers, our superiors, our local communities, and the world around us. The heart of God is concerned about all of this. As such, we should be concerned about these things as well.

Conclusion: Seek Out Opportunities to Make a Difference in the World. This journey of helping others and working for the benefit of those around us begins with a simple yet crucial element: *awareness*. We must be tuned in to the reality that surrounds us. We must be cognizant of how our own actions impact the lives of other people.

May our work reflect the heart of this God who loves and is concerned with the well-being of other people. May we be servants in our workplaces.