

Christ and Work

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Preacher: Chris Steward

[0 : 00] We are continuing our sermon series on Christ and culture.! And this morning I have the privilege of talking about work, vocation, job, job.

! Martin Luther once said, a dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God. How does that happen? How can we do that?

How can we milk a cow to the glory of God? How does that apply to us today? Why do we work? Why is it important to work?

All questions I hope to answer this morning in our Christ and Culture series this morning, topic of work. Let's pray together.

Holy, holy, holy are you, O God. Worthy of all praise this morning, I pray that that would occur.

[1 : 04] God, as I stand up here, as I speak, I speak your words, I would make much of you and little of me. God, that we would all be touched by you this morning.

God, that we would see our calling in our life as nothing elementary or simple or not important. That we would see it as a calling from you, placed us where we are, to make much of you, to bring glory to you, to worship you alone.

Help us, God, this morning. Help us to hear. Help me to speak. Help us to act as if we did hear a word from you this morning.

As I pray that will occur. I love you. We love you because you first loved us. For your son, Jesus. In his name I pray.

Amen. Ephesians 4, verse 28 is our text this morning. It's the main text, but we're going to springboard off of it.

[2 : 17] We're going to go different directions in the Bible. So, mark it. Open up to 428 and we'll just kind of dig through.

Chapter 4, verse 28 reads, Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Now, this verse sets up very similar to the book or the letter to the Ephesians. In that chapters 1 through 3 define for us who we are in Christ and because of Christ.

It tells us, because of the work of Christ on the cross, because of the work of Christ in our hearts, who we are. So, we are adopted sons. We who were dead are now alive.

We are one in Christ. Chapters 1 through 3. Chapters 4 through 6 then tell us how we should live in light of who we are in Christ. So, a higher calling.

[3 : 23] A higher way to live. Well, if we read verse 28, we have the first part of who we are, a thief. Second part, how we should live then.

A higher calling once again. My sermon this morning is two parts as well to kind of keep the theme going. First part, I'm going to talk about stealing, how it applies to us.

Second part, I'm going to talk about work and how that applies to us. So, the verse starts out by saying, let the thief no longer steal.

Some quick observations, just for all of us to be on the same page here with this verse. Paul is speaking to Christians. If you flip back to the beginning of chapter 4, it says, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. He's speaking to Christians. He's writing to the church in Ephesus. So, we can't say that this thief is not a believer. He's speaking to believers. Second observation, Paul is speaking to Christians who have not yet given up the practice of stealing.

[4 : 42] He says, let the thief no longer. If it was somebody or people who had once stolen and not stolen anymore, it would say something in past tense, that those who stole.

Third observation really quick. Thieves are not outside the grace of God. These are Christians, once again, the church at Ephesus.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 9 through 11, we have a list. It says, or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived. Neither the sexual immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

That's where a lot of us want to grab that stone that Nathan talked about two weeks ago and throw it and just stop there. But, verse 11, and such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sacrificed, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

[5 : 56] Even thieves are not outside the grace of God. Think about the thief on the cross, Luke 23. He turns to Jesus and says, remember me. Jesus says, today you will be with me in paradise.

Fourth observation, real quick. Salvation changes the heart, but does not automatically change a man's conduct or thinking. Okay? We have redemption stories all around us where this has happened.

Where guys have had addictions and the moment they've received Christ, the moment they become a Christian, that addiction is over with. Drugs, alcohol, those types of things.

And those of redemption stories are to be rejoiced and to be excited about. But that's not the norm. That's not an automatic thing. Coming to faith in Jesus does not end our struggle with sin.

Romans 6, Romans 7 tells us that it is a process. We need to continually fight that sin. This process is God perfecting us.

[7 : 03] It's God working in us. In a book called When Sinners Say I Do, which is what we've been studying through with a couple couples for marital counseling. He gives an illustration of buttoning a shirt.

Now if you start at the top of your shirt and you get one button wrong, what happens? All the rest of them are all wrong and your shirt's all wonky. You've got to get the first one right and then you work your way down.

Well, it's the same here. God is perfecting us. We've got the first button. And it's a process. He is continually buttoning and getting that shirt right on us.

God is working in us. Perfecting us. It is a process where we fight against sin. Turn to Romans real quick. We'll end with these quick observations here.

Romans chapter 6. Just so you don't just have to take my word for it. Romans chapter 6 verse 12.

[8 : 10] It says, Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness. But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

And your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace. Romans chapter 12.

Romans chapter 12 verse 1 and 2.

Satan doesn't automatically end our struggle with it. So, the verse in Ephesians 4 verse 28 says, Let the thief no longer steal.

It is no shock to you when I say that stealing is wrong. We all agree. Shake your heads. Yes. Stealing is wrong. here's some things that stealing does.

[9 : 39] Stealing seeks to turn over what Adam was given to do. And thus, us. Adam was given to work.

He was commanded to work the garden. It was a delight to work. It was a joy. But because of the fall, work became toil, became hard, became painful.

And as we see in the curse in Genesis chapter 3, things that were a delight became, because of the fall, painful. Women, childbearing, became painful.

Men, work, became toil. Stealing seeks to turn over what Adam and we were created to do.

So are there areas in your life where you avoid work? Where you avoid what you were given to do? Where you avoid the curse? Where there's laziness and slothfulness in your life?

[10 : 42] Are there times where you avoid work at your job by cheating on your time or stealing from your employees? Employers. I have a temptation every week.

Every week to do just that. I have an hourly rate. I work for a friend of mine and he trusts me and believes me. And he asks me, what time do I get off at the end of the day? And I can very easily

say, I got off at 5 when I left at 4.

I can very easily say, I got off at 5.30. The temptation is there for all of us. The question is, are you stealing from your employer? Are you stealing and trying to turn over what we were created and given to do?

That is, work. Stealing is also self-worship. Stealing is putting your needs above everyone else's. It is feasting on the labor of others. It is forcing others to sacrifice, to serve your own self-interest.

[11 : 49] Think about it. Somebody does the work, and what do you do? You steal. You take. I'm not calling anybody out. You as a general term, I promise. Me as well.

When we worship ourselves, we are not worshipping Jesus. Jesus, the one who died, so that we could have victory over this very sin of self-worship and of theft.

So is there an area in your life where you take advantage of others by stealing or by avoiding a particular job even? Do you worship yourself instead of the Creator?

Stealing is also not trusting God. God who promises to provide for His children. Remember Ephesians 4, our text.

He is talking to true Christians. Not trusting God. You guys remember the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6? The subtitle will say something like do not worry, do not be anxious.

[12 : 59] Jesus says do not be anxious about tomorrow. Look at the birds of the air. Look at the fields. The fields are dressed better than Solomon ever was. The flowers are dressed.

The birds are provided for. Much more does the Father provide for you. See, God is the provider for His children and stealing does not trust God.

A person steals because they no longer believe God is God. That He is who He says He is. Stealing puts trust in the thief and not in the giver.

Not in the Creator. Think about the thief on the cross again. At the end of His life. Moments, seconds even before death.

Where was His trust put? Where did He trust? His entire life as a thief was He trusted in His ability. He trusted in what He could do to avoid work.

[14 : 05] He was hopeless in this moment at death. He could not trust in Himself. His bag of tricks was empty. The skills that He learned to avoid work could not help Him.

And what did He do? He turned to the Savior. Are there areas in your life where you are not trusting God to provide? Are there areas in your life where you say, God, I've got this.

I will steal. I will take care of this. Maybe your anxiousness has overcome you and forced you to take what isn't yours. Do you believe the promises of the Bible?

Do you believe the promises of God? If so, then why do you steal? And let's be honest, I'm not even talking about physical things for the most part. We steal the glory of God.

We steal the worship that is due Him. And we try to worship ourselves. That's bigger. That's worse than stealing a pack of gum. Or a stapler. Or name it. At work.

[15 : 05] Time. There are times where we steal His worship and His glory. We try to bring it to us. Bring it to our attention.

You believe the promises of God. You believe. Then why don't you trust? Why don't you trust? See, what you don't trust, you don't worship. So if you don't trust God, you will not worship God. God is our provider.

And stealing is not trusting God. Last thing about stealing. Stealing is a rebellion against the sovereignty of God.

Stealing is a rebellion against the sovereignty of God. God provides. God knows the needs of His children. And He distributes material things accordingly.

[16 : 06] To God is good, no matter what. God is good whether you drive a nice car or a dumpy car. God is good. No matter if you live on the streets or not, He is still good.

Stealing robs you of accepting that truth. Stealing rebels against God and His control. To eat trust, faith, joy, love, all of them are robbed from the life of a thief.

Think about it. You trust in the Lord. No. You trust in yourself. You have faith in God and His promises. No. You have faith in your abilities and your skills.

You have joy in the Lord. No. You have pain, sorrow, anxiousness from yourself and your circumstances. You have love for God.

No. You have love for self. God is sovereign. He is good. We can trust Him completely.

[17:17] We don't need to rebel against this truth. So, in our text, in Ephesians 4, verse 28, it says, let the thief no longer steal.

Christians in the church at Ephesus. Christians at the church at Christ's family church. Christians here at 60 South. Christians in Dahlonga.

let the thief no longer steal. So, that's the first part of our verse. Let us now dig in to our topic. Work. The second part of the verse applies, again, just like the first, to all of us. Speaks to all of us. Whether we are a thief or not, and I would argue that all of us at one time or another are thieves, have been thieves.

So, here we go. Gives us a definition of a Christian work ethic, so to speak. Verse 28, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

[18:34] Now, what I have is I have five reasons why we work. And, maybe or maybe not, it applies, it fits real well into our Christ-end culture, but here's why I put five reasons why we work.

Because I believe that the how we work, how we spend our time working, how we work our tails off, how we act at work, will come out of the why we work.

Okay? So, first one. why do we work? Five reasons we work. We've already talked about it. Reason one, we work because we were created to work.

It was put in from the Creator in Genesis chapter 2 verse 15, Adam was given to work. And it was a pleasure to do so.

He delighted in it. See, when we work, when we work, as the text says in Ephesians 4, when we labor doing honest work, we bring glory to God.

[19:44] We'll touch on that in just a little bit. See, it was the curse. It was the curse that made work a burden, painful. ESV translates it toil.

Toil. Toil. Now, I had a curse-filled day of work this week. 510 feet of conduit in trenches and ditches, running wire under the scorching sun.

It was toil. It was hard. No matter how hard it was, no matter how hard and difficult, I was created to do that work.

I was given that moment to work to the glory of God. we work because we were created to work. Secondly, we work to provide for our families.

In 1 Timothy chapter 5, and I'm going to highlight verse 8, but 3 through 8 gives us a little bit of guidance here. Verse 8, Paul says to Timothy, if anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for members of his household, he has denied his faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

[21:10] Those are strong words. If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for members of his household, he is denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

If you are a Christian, if you are a child of God and you do not provide for your family, repent this morning. God has put you in the place where you are to provide for your family.

Not to provide for the pleasures that you want to participate in, not to buy all the toys and fun things that are out there for you to play with. I'm going to speak to the young guys here for a minute.

Now, as Nathan did a couple weeks ago, opinion alert. Okay, here's my opinion, but I think it's based in truth. Okay?

Young guys, you may be paying bills. You may be paying a credit card bill, paying a cell phone bill. You may be paying a car payment or insurance.

[22:18] But you have not arrived. You have not arrived. There is another level to manhood. There is another level to being a man and that is providing for mouths.

That is for providing for a family. There are mouths to feed. It's like the picture of the mother bird coming in.

It's got food hanging out of her beak and the kids are all open. The baby birds, not kids. Baby birds are all open squawking and the mom drops the worms and stuff in the mouth. Well, that's you guys. Men, that's you.

You are to provide for your families. Are you providing for your family? Young guys, do you want to provide for your family? You have been created to do it.

You have been commanded to do it. Now, commercial break, intermission. Of course, there are disabled mentally and physically people who cannot provide.

[23:24] They cannot work. But what is the heart of that person? What is the heart of that disabled person? Do they desire to provide? Do they try to provide spiritually?

Do they try to provide for their family? Do they want to? Is there a burden in them to provide? Guys, this is not a loophole.

It's because you have a desire to. It doesn't mean you do. It's because I say I'm a stick. It doesn't make me a stick. We work to provide for our families.

If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Men, provide for your families.

Future men, future patriarchs of your family, provide for your families. Thirdly, so first, we work, we were created to work.

[24 : 28] Second, we work to provide for our families. Third, we work to be generous from our text in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 28.

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

We work to be generous. Yes, point two was we work to provide for our families, but we also work to be generous. We work so that we can give more, so that we have something to share with anyone in need.

Now that's a paradigm shift. That's a big shift in thinking compared to what the world teaches. Agree? That's a huge change in thought.

Now we have a paradox here in this verse. The beginning of the verse says, let the thief no longer steal. Selfish, self-worship, self-gratification, self-provision, and then at the end it says, work to share with anyone in need.

[25 : 42] Selfless, others-focused, kingdom-minded, gospel-centered, God-exalting. So, we no longer think of ourselves, we think of others and we provide for them.

That's the idea here. Isn't that what the gospel of Jesus Christ does? Isn't that what Jesus did himself? He thought of others and went ahead and died for others to have life.

College students, you are on a collision course to making good money. You're headed in that direction. Some of you maybe, some of you might not, but most of you have an opportunity to make good money.

money. What are you going to work for? What is going to be your end goal? Is it to give away? Is it to be generous?

So, let's say you make \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000 a year. What can you live off of? What can you live off of?

[26 : 53] Give the rest. Give the rest away. Be generous, as Ephesians 4.28 tells us. Maybe, just maybe, you will be put in that position to provide for a kingdom movement that we have never seen before.

Just maybe your money that you give might be the fuel, might be what provides for a movement. six-figure income even. That's not for your kingdom. That's not. That's for God's kingdom. Live modestly. Give much.

Don't fall for what others in the world tells you. You don't need the \$50,000 car or the \$200 jeans or the \$300,000 house.

your kingdom will fall. That's what you try to build. Babylon, Roman Empire, they built their kingdoms and what happened?

[28 : 05] They fell. Now, of course, you're not going to be building a Roman Empire, but you are going to be building a castle. If you're trying to build your kingdom, you're trying to build your castle.

You're trying to build your retirement, you're trying to build this, you're trying to build that. You get all your stuff around you. That stuff is worthless. Worth nothing in the big picture.

And here in Ephesians 4, 28, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands. We would agree with that, yes. Let us all do honest work with our own hands, dig ditches, teach students, be lawyers, doctors, heal people.

Yes. So that he may have something to share with anyone in need. That should be our drive. That should be our direction we're headed.

That's why we get a six figure income, so that we can then be generous to people in need. We can provide for them. That's what we can provide for ourselves. We work to be generous.

[29 : 15] Do you work to be generous? College students, will you work to be generous? Fourthly, we work to build the kingdom.

We work to build the kingdom. Turn to 1 Peter 2. If you've got a bookmark or keep your finger there because we will come back to this text in a moment.

In 1 Peter 2, we have a couple verses and I want to highlight actually just one right now. 1 Peter 2, verse 12.

The text says, keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of his salvation. We work to build the kingdom. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.

[30 : 27] Now here, Gentiles is a people group, yes, but he's also speaking, the people group represents sinners, lost people, non-believers. Non-believers. believers. So they may see your good deeds, the way you work, how you work, why you work.

And the end result here from this text, so they may glorify God on the day of visitation, so that they may become Christians. We work to be generous in and out of our circle of influence, but now we work to preach the gospel in our circle of influence and build the kingdom.

Colossians 1 verse 28-29 says, Him we proclaim, Him being Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

for this I toil, there's that word again, painful, struggling, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.

We have an impact on people around us, people who we work with, people who we sit next to and cubicle next to us or dig ditches with or heal people with.

[31 : 57] we have an impact on people's lives. The people in your life have been placed there. You have been placed there for a reason. Been placed there by a sovereign God.

The question is, will you make much of yourself, will you steal, self-worship, or will you make much of Jesus?

You're going to do one of two things. You will either make much of yourself by complaining, by grumbling, by having conversations in secret about co-workers and the employer and the company and how horrible it is, by stealing, by hating the work and even by being apathetic and not caring. Or, you will make much of Jesus by talking about Him, by preaching the gospel, by having hard conversations, by working to your fullest potential.

Now, there's a sports cliché. It applies to a temporal thing, sports, temporal activities, here today, maybe gone tomorrow.

[33 : 17] But we can apply it to an eternal application. application here. Sports of the Slave is leaving it all on the field, giving our everything out there on the field so we have nothing left.

That team really left it all on the field. They really worked hard. They played hard. They played together. They really showed us something. We should leave it all on the field when we are at work. We should work to our fullest potential. Why? Because we can make much of Jesus. We can make much of Him by working and leaving it all out on the field.

As Colossians says, do you toil? Do you grow tired? Do you grow weary to teach and warn the people at your workplace with your words and with your actions?

sins? Let us all repent of our selfishness and fear. Let us trust God. Let us all work as if eternity hangs in the balance.

[34 : 28] Let us all work and be the employees of the month. We should be the best employees. We should be the guys working our tails off.

We should be the guys that are hated honestly. Oh, that Daniel, he works his tail off. He makes us all look bad.

Amen. Why do you work that way, Daniel? Well, because God tells me to, because I love Jesus, I don't make much of Jesus. Let me tell you about Jesus. There's opportunities through the way you work to make much of Jesus, to make much of Him, or to try to make much of yourself.

Fifthly, and we've touched on it, pieces here and there, we work to glorify the King. We work to glorify Jesus.

Okay? Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Put a mark in 1 Peter because we'll be back. 1 Corinthians chapter 10. If you're familiar with 1 Corinthians chapter 10, then you know where we're headed.

[35 : 38] at the end of the chapter, we work to glorify the King. Not only do we work to build the Kingdom, capital K, we work to glorify the King, capital K.

1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 31. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God. Just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, we work to be generous, we work to be selfless, but that of many that they may be saved.

Our ultimate purpose to work, our ultimate trump card, is the work for the glory of God and to the glory of God. So whatever you do, do all the glory of God.

This means that whoever you are and whatever you do, no matter what, okay, not no matter what, scratch that, there's some things we can't do to the glory of God and you guys can figure those out.

[36 : 55] Due to the glory of God. William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English, he says this, he says, if we look externally, look externally, so from our vantage point, there is a difference between washing of dishes and preaching of the Word of God.

But, as touching to please God, none at all. God looketh not principally at the external part of the work, but much more to the heart of Him that does it.

In other words, God looks at the heart of a man and not the task that the man is doing or woman. Think about it, He's right.

The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly raised the bar. Why? Because it was about the heart. It was not about what the people were doing. He called the religious leaders whitewashed tombs. Tombs have dead carcasses, dead bodies in them, dead corpses, smelly, stinky, disgusting, and the outside, it's all pretty and prim and proper and painted.

What you do on the outside does not matter. It's what's on the inside is what He's saying. It means that whether you gather garbage, you dig ditches, or you preach to thousands, all of it can be done for the glory of God.

[38 : 25] It also means that you're calling to teach. You're calling to sit in a cubicle all day. You're calling to take care of animals. You're calling to build houses.

It's no less important than the preacher who's preaching on Sunday morning or at a major conference in a big city. Which also means that preachers in this room, you're not any more important, I'm not any more important than any of you.

that is empowering. That is freeing. That is good news for all of us. All of us in this room who are called into the world as county employees, corporate employees, small business owners, preachers and counselors, all of us can bring glory to God in what we do.

We can all storm the world with the gospel, by the power of the gospel, for the love of people, and for the love of God. See, we infiltrate the workplace with the gospel when and only when we let the gospel infiltrate every area of our life.

So then culture is then engaged by the gospel in us, in our workplaces. So why do we work?

[39 : 47] The how comes out of why we work. we work to bring glory to God. We work to be generous. Now, if you notice the five reasons that I gave you, there are no selfish reasons.

There are no self-centered me reasons. We don't work for ourselves. Sure, we have bills. Sure, we pay our bills. Sure, we have to buy groceries.

We take care of our families. but nothing self-focused. We're to be focused on others in God's kingdom.

Because the gospel leads to a heart change. And when the heart changes, our want-tos change as well. What we want to do. So out of the why, why we work, the how we work.

Why we work because of the gospel, how do we work? How do we live? I made an assumption this morning. I assume that everyone in this room are Christians.

[40 : 58] And the assumption was, or is, because you can't live this way without Christ. You cannot live and work these five ways.

You can try. But you can't work this way without Christ. In Ephesians chapter 4 and in 1 Peter chapter 2, both texts come after deep doctrinal statements about who you are as a Christian.

Ephesians chapter 4 verse 17 says, Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

But that is not the way you learn Christ. Assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on

the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

[42 : 22] Put off the old self. Put on the new. You are a Christian. You are born again. You are bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. Live like it. Big doctrinal statement.

1 Peter 2. verse 9 and 10. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellency of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. mercy. You are a chosen race.

You are a royal priesthood, and the only way that you are a royal priesthood is that you are adopted into the family of God royalty. So the assumption is that everyone in here is a Christian.

And it is a mistake for me to assume that. Our text tells us you cannot live this way without being a Christian.

[43 : 39] So are you a chosen race? Are you a royal priesthood? Are you a holy nation? Do you know Jesus as your Savior?

Do you work to His glory or to your own? See, work really becomes a worship issue. When you really unfold it, when you really peel back all the layers, do you work to worship yourself or do you work to worship God?

And that is the question we have to ask and that we have to answer this morning. So when we see our, our, uh, uh, what's it called?

What's it called, Nathan? Our Christ family exists to, yeah, our vision. It's called a vision. Hey, John, delete that part out of the recording. When you see our vision, we exist to proclaim, display, and experience the supremacy of Christ in all things.

It becomes a worship issue. Work is a worship issue. And I think as we go through this sermon series, we're going to see that every topic comes down to a worship issue.

[45 : 05] Every topic. Do we worship ourselves? Do we worship culture? Do we worship whatever big thing it is? Or do we worship the creator? Let's pray.