

Sermon Series: Transforming Society  
 Sermon Topic: My Work is my Ministry (Rev Melvyn Mak)  
 Sermon Text: Genesis 2:1-15

### Genesis 2:1-15

*Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.<sup>3</sup> Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.<sup>4</sup> This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.<sup>5</sup> Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground,<sup>6</sup> but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.<sup>8</sup> Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.<sup>9</sup> The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>10</sup> A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.<sup>11</sup> The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.<sup>12</sup> (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.)<sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.<sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

### Introduction

- The marketplace: majority of Christians spend majority of their time interfacing with majority of the world.
- Hence, an understanding of the theology and purpose of work is necessary, if we are to fulfil God's calling for us in the world we live in.

### 1. Our Work is a Divine Command (It's Imperative)

*Six days you shall labor and do all your work,<sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns (Exo 20:9-10)*

- Work existed before the fall (ref. Gen 2:2, 15).
- Work itself is not a punishment or curse due to the fall.
- God Himself set a pattern of work for us.
- But toiling is a curse, the result of the fall.

#### a. Be Careful of Slackness or Laziness

*Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man (Prov 6:6-10,11)*

*For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." (2 Thess 3:10) [Note: this verse is not referring to those who cannot work due to valid reasons]*

*All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty (Prov 14:23)*

b. Be Careful of Workaholism

- While diligence is a virtue, workaholism is not.

*Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves (Psalm 127:1-2)*

*Do not wear yourself out to get rich, do not trust your own cleverness (Prov 23:4)*

c. Differentiate Between The Right To Remuneration And Greed

- <sup>7</sup> Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? <sup>8</sup> Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? <sup>9</sup> For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? <sup>10</sup> Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? <sup>12</sup> If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ (1 Cor 9:7-12)
- There is a difference between desiring remuneration to support ourselves (ref. The apostle Paul in Acts 20:34 - You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions) and greed.

d. Be Mindful Of Your Ambition – Good and Bad

*It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation (Rom 15:20)*

*For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice (James 3:16)*

- God looks at the motivation of our hearts. He wants to sanctify our intentions. "It is not what you do that counts, but why you do that counts" – A.W.Tozer

e. Keep Your Eyes Fixed On The Eternal Divine Mandate

*"Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' (Luke 19:17-19)*

- Through work, God hones our faithfulness so we will be prepared to reign and rule with him when he comes to reign.
- We should also help others in the course of our work. If work is so important, we must give the poor the dignity of work, and not just charity.

*"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup> Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God" (Lev 19:9-10)*

**2. Our Work is Our Worship To God (It's Inspirational)**

Worship is not just what we do in church. 'AVODAH' (Hebrew) is translated in English to mean both **work** and **worship**! Whether as a noun, verb or in substantive form, it appears in the Bible **1214** times (That's huge!)

- In Exodus, the word 'worship' is translated as service. Our work is our service. Everything must be done in service to God.

<sup>12</sup> *And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you<sup>oJ</sup> will **worship** God on this mountain." (Exo 3:12)*

*"Now get to **work**. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks." (Exo 5:18)*

- The first mention of worship in Genesis 22 is in relation to the call for Abraham to worship God on the mountain that He was asked to sacrifice Issac on. Worship is sacrifice! It is not about where you worship (ie. a place) but an act of service to God.
- Out of Jesus's 132 public appearances in the NT, 122 were in the workplace. Of the 52 parables Jesus told, 45 had a workplace context.
- Jesus never addressed the sacred and secular divide because such a divide never existed in Jewish thinking. The Jews understood that everything they did in work and in the synagogue was to be done to God's glory. This is why the quality is so important to Jewish workers. They are not working solely for themselves, but their work is also their worship to God – OS Hilman

#### a. Work as Worship Is To Be Excellent In All We Do

*"Whatever you do, **work at it with all your heart**, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. **It is the Lord Christ you are serving.** Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favouritism" (Col 3:23-25)*

*"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God**" (1 Cor 10:31). The word 'glory' refers to an accurate, exact representation of God. Hence, we should aim to be excellent in our work to reflect who God is.*

*"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do **good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph 2:10)*

- The parable of the orange, written by Randall Lidal (*Living with a purpose*) reminds us that there is a difference between someone who just works, and someone who does his best in excellence. It would be difficult to get others to listen to the message of the gospel if we are not excellent in our work.

#### b. Work as Worship Grows Our Character

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. (Rom 8:28-29)*

*"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as **shrewd** as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt 10:16)*

- Win-win situation

- Ministry (diakoneo) – serve (acts of kindness)
- Pray for every appointment to be a divine appointment
- Using the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the office/school/home [being equipped and living it out in the world]
- Strive to be a W.I.S.E (WQ: Work Quotient; IQ: Intelligence Quotient; SQ: Spiritual Quotient; EQ: Emotional Quotient) person
- Share the Gospel with your life, and if possible, use words (who you are speaks so loud that I can't hear what you say)

### 3. Our Work is the Platform For Transformation (It Impacts)

*“You are the **salt** of the **earth**. But if the salt loses its **saltiness**, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. “You are the **light** of the **world**. A town built on a hill **cannot be hidden**. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let **your light shine** before others, that they may see your **good work** and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5: 13-15)*

Note the following words in the text above. “You ARE” (not will be...); “EARTH” – not just in the church, but to the WORLD; YOU!

*“Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? (Luke 14:34).*

- Salt has both preservative and promotive functions, but in this context its promotive function is emphasized.
- The common phrase is “I can bring the horse to the water, but I cannot force it to drink the water”. However, “Your role is not to force it to drink the water; your role is to create the thirst in him!”

*“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, **faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead**” (James 2:14-17)*

- Work is the platform for Jubilee transformation. God’s kingdom is an upside down kingdom, and His heart is for those who are downtrodden. We can show a heart for others by initiating and being involved in corporate social responsibility at the office. For example, various Tel-Cos call centres are staffed by prisoners [call centre set up in prison] and they are paid a salary. Through this, they learn how to handle rejection, how to be patient and how to manage their anger. The Tel-Cos report that these are their most productive call-centres as the prisoners are grateful for this work opportunity, and desire to give their best.

### Concluding Thought

There is no divide between the sacred and the secular; it is not what you do that counts. It is why you do it that is crucial. Motivation is everything! – A.W. Tozer

### Discussion Questions:

