**Calling in the Marketplace : Anchor in the Word for Work**

**(Col. 3:22-4:1)**

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Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.  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. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. (Colossians 3:22- 4:1)

Introduction

The biblical narrative falls into four distinctive categories: Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration. The big picture of scripture is God’s salvation plan through Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Everything in the Old Testament points to Christ – His coming, His dying, and His resurrection. Everything in the New Testament points back to Him – that He came, He lived, He died, and He rose again.

We like to put ourselves in the centre of the narrative, but it is not about us. We are not the centrepiece. It is Christ who is at the centre. Scripture points us to Him. Christianity is founded on the theology of God revealing Himself to us. Scripture points us to who God is, how He thinks, how He handles His people, how He functions. If we do not know God based on who He revealed Himself to be, then we are just engineering God using our own imagination.

The Word of God points you to God Himself. Know Him!

**BIG IDEA**

**Anchor in the Word for Work**

**Why anchor in the Word of God?**

The Kingdom of God has been inaugurated through Jesus’ first coming, and will come to its fullness when Jesus comes again. It is an upside down kingdom. As believers, we see and live all of life from biblical lenses. The Word of God shows us how.

The Kingdom of God is an upside down kingdom. The values of His kingdom is different from the values of this world. For instance, Jesus says that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

**With respect to work, the Word:**

# Shapes our view of and values at work

Here are some of the common perceptions that we have about work, and these views are held even by Christians.

1. Work is a necessary evil. It has no intrinsic value. Do the minimum. Work is just a means of getting an income, to feed myself. It is my rice bowl. Some Christians work so that they can give to church, which is considered as more sacred as compared to secular work.
2. Work and faith are separate matters. Whether my faith is reflected through my work, is my business. Christians who adopt this thinking do not think through how their faith shapes and affects their work. It is the field of least resistance. The pitfall of this is that many find their work very meaningless, and they are more prone to taking shortcuts and cut corners. Some underwork and try to get away with it.
3. Work is my significance. I have goals that I want to achieve and I want to achieve them here and now. Work is my all and all, it is my identity and my significance. Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones spoke to a group of doctors, saying, “A lot of you would have this written on your tombstone: Born a man, die of doctor.” Meaning that, your profession is all that you are. The pitfall to this thinking is that success will get to your head, and failure will destroy your heart. Some overwork, and expect their staff to do the same as well, breaking the Sabbath commandment.

Some think that this life is it. It is all there is, therefore, they live life based on the YOLO (You Only Live Once) and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) syndrome. They want to ensure that everything on their bucket list is checked.

**Some common values at work**

1. Motivation: carrot or stick; for my own sake.

– Motivation in the form of money, or fear of being caught.

1. People: Treated as objects

 – People are to be used, to advance one’s own agenda.

1. Truth: Relative. Morality is do as-you-see-fit (just do not get caught!)

– What is truth to you may not be truth to me.

1. Posture: Self-promotion and self-inflation; overpromise – underdeliver

– Puffed-up resumes and over-exaggerated accomplishments. This happens in courtship as well, where guys who try to court girls overpromise and underdeliver.

1. Reward: Your best life now!

The biblical history of our lives as Christians are not based on the rise and fall of dynasties, civilisations, or empires. For the Christian, see work through the lens of the biblical narrative: Creation – Fall – Redemption – Restoration. (The good, the evil, the new and the perfect) When we know where we fit in this narrative, we can make sense of work better. Right now, we fit in the narrative between Redemption and Restoration.

At Creation, there was work in the Garden of Eden. This shows that work is intrinsic, for God told Adam and Eve to work the land and take care of it. At the Fall, work has been cursed. Therefore, work is extremely toilsome and frustrating. At Redemption, Jesus’ work on the cross, at a micro level, captures and resurrects dead hearts, saving us from sin. At a macro level, He is making all things new, all things including work. So for the Christian now, we work unto the Lord. At Restoration, there is work still in the perfect heaven and earth. We shall enjoy work.

“My chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” (Isaiah 65:22)

**The Definition of Work:**

“Work is taking the raw material of creation and developing it for the sake of others” – Tim Keller

For example, the process of baking uses the raw materials of eggs and flour, to bake a cake for others to eat. A physiotherapist takes the raw material of a misaligned muscle or bone, and fixes it for someone else. A musician takes the raw material of sound, to create music for others to listen to.

**The Gospel changes our view of work**

1. All legitimate work, in and of itself, is good and has intrinsic value. Do your best.

Servants, do what you’re told by your earthly masters. And don’t just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. (Colossians 3:22-23, MSG)

When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing. (Psalm 145:16)

God feeds us through others who work by planting the food, by harvesting the food, by processing and packing the food, by delivering the food to the supermarket, by cooking and serving the food to you. Every part of that process is work. Therefore, work is intrinsically good, because everyone in that value chain are the fingers of God. That is why Martin Luther says, “Everyone who does good work, are the fingers of God.”

1. While my work doesn’t define me, but my conduct, ethics and quality of work reflects my witness of the Gospel.

The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being a follower of Jesus doesn’t cover up bad work. (Colossians 3:25, MSG)

We all have a missional calling in our workplace, which is to proclaim the Gospel by word and deed. However, the credibility of our witness depends a lot on our conduct, ethics, and the quality of our work.

A message for millennials: Grow in grit, which is the indomitable spirit that perseveres in the long term, and grow in resilience, the ability to bounce back when there are setbacks.

1. My ultimate master is Christ. Live wisely; work with a hope set on Christ.

Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you’ll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you’re serving is Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24, MSG)

If Christ is the ultimate Master that we serve, we can rest assured that our salary, our bonus, our increment and our promotion – it is Christ who gives. Even if there is injustice to you now, you will receive an inheritance later. You can rest, knowing that God will not overwork you, for He has given you the Sabbath commandment.

And masters, treat your servants considerately. Be fair with them. Don’t forget for a minute that you, too, serve a Master – God in heaven. (Colossians 4:1, MSG)

**The Gospel changes our values at work**

1. Motivation: Caring and sustaining God’s world; in the service of others, to the glory of God.
2. People: Treated with respect – created in God’s image.
3. Truth: Absolute. Morality is God’s standards (God uncovers all!)

– Truth is the currency in God’s Kingdom, and that truth is scripture. God will uncover all, and even right now, things are being uncovered, and things will continue to be uncovered.

1. Posture: Secure in Christ; under-promise – overdeliver

- As children of God, we are now secure in Christ, we do not have to keep self-promoting ourselves. We can be more modest and measured in what we promise.

1. Reward: Your best life later!

These values are a change of perspective, viewing work through the Gospel, for the glory of God.

“Right is right even if no one is doing it; wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it” – St Augustine of Hippo

# Anchor us in Christ when times are hard

When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future. (Ecclesiastes 7:14)

When times are good, when our bonuses are fat and our incomes are high, we need to remember that it is God who gives us the ability and the strength to work. We must not forget the Lord.

When times are bad, hold on to God, no matter what. Do not hold on to the outcomes of the situation, but hold on to God. Hold on to God by holding on to His Word.

# Arms us for spiritual battles

The Armor of God includes a dagger for close-range combat. This means that spiritual battles are fought within close-range with the enemy. You kill your enemy or your enemy will kill you. Kill sin and temptation by using the weapon of the Word of God.

The Christian’s weakness is unbelief. The devil will use deception, doubt, discouragement, disappointment, disobedience and division, to cause unbelief in your faith. Therefore, recognise the devil’s strategies and use the Word of God as your weapon against him.

If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. (Isaiah 7:9)

**How do you anchor in the Word of God?**

1. Study the Word in its context

Read the verse in context with the passage, the passage with the book, and the book in the narrative of scripture, so we do not take scripture out of context.

1. Learn in community

For those going through specific ethical work issues, study the Word of God together and make your decision in submission to Him.

Conclusion

Know God by knowing His Word, and anchor in the Word for work.



Sermon summary by Anthea