

The Work God Gives Us
Sunday School Lesson
Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-8, 15-20
June 16, 2024

Let us pray

O Holy God and Creator of the Universe, thank you for being present with us this week. Open our hearts to hear your word so we may be faithful disciples who are known by our love for one another and for our neighbors. Amen.

Our Purpose Statement: **To embrace God's vision of work for humanity**

When I was a little girl, we often had the option of spending the night at our grandparent's house during the summer and on Friday nights. My grandparents lived across town, near the church we attended. There was a goldfish pond in the yard that had muscadine grape vines growing on the trellises. In the front bedroom was a fascinating electric train set-up that would entertain us for hours. Grandmother was always in the kitchen cooking. She got up at 4:00am every morning to cook breakfast and pack lunch for my grandfather before he headed to the farm by 5:00am. If we were lucky, we got to go with him.

Papaw made rounds at the farm every morning. We would check on the baby chicks growing in the barn to make sure they had plenty of food and water. We would feed the chickens and the pigs while gathering any eggs. We would drive out to the pastures to put out hay and salt licks. If there was time, Papaw would take us fishing at the pond. Before we left, we would drive around the farm using all the fire lanes just to make sure there had been no intruders or to address any issues that had arisen. When we went with Papaw, we would get home by 11:00am in just enough time to wash up and eat lunch. After lunch, Papaw would head to his wholesale house across the street and work until supper time.

My family's schedule was a bit different since my dad had an eight to five job. We ate all our meals together and Dad was usually home from lunch except for Mondays. On Mondays, Dad went to Rotary at the Episcopal church. It is always interesting how we end up in the work we do. My grandfather had an eighth grade education but he knew how to run a business and he knew how to care for his employees. My dad became a lawyer but ended up running the Trust and Investment department of a local bank. He put heart and soul into caring for people whose primary source of income had died and who trusted their estate to the bank to make certain the needs of their families would be met. That related to my dad's own story. He was raised by his grandparents when his mother died and his father abandoned him in grief. Both grandparents would die before dad was fourteen. The estate left to him was mismanaged and dad did not want that happening to someone else.

How did you end up in the work that you do or did before you retired? What were the influences on your career choices?

Read Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-8, 15-20

Value your Work

God was the one who originally gave the first humans meaningful work. God created this world then allowed humanity to name the birds, the beasts, the insects, and the fish. God provided a garden which had to be cared for. For those who garden, you know it is hard but satisfying work. If we look throughout the Bible, we discover that our work shapes us in ways we notice but also shapes us in ways we do not notice. Because we live in a society that is far too influenced by power and money, we often find that some professions devalue the work of others. For me, that is just wrong and the recent pandemic proved it.

When the Trump Administration shutdown all businesses in March of 2020, we discovered the difference between professions and real essential workers. Suddenly, dental offices were closed, restaurants were shuttered, and schools ceased to reopen after spring break. But some kept working – truck drivers continued to deliver produce, meat, canned goods and dairy to grocery stores. Those who stocked the shelves every night became as important as anyone as we switched to online shopping.

Janitors in the hospitals were as important as surgeons. Postal workers and delivery workers were our lifeline for the household items we needed each day. We discovered the sacred worth of those workers who had previously been overlooked. We also discovered that shipping all our manufacturing overseas was not a good thing. We needed a social safety net that we did not have in place. That was not the fault of the Trump administration but it was the fault of those who think the only driver of value should be money. Remember, we are disciples of the Son of God who never held a political office, who never owned a home, and who never valued people according to the rules of society, economics, or power.

Our work can partner with God to produce value in people and value in communities. Our lesson today promotes this idea of finding meaning in our work through seeing it as partnering with God. One more thing – work is not just what you get paid to do. Many times we work through volunteering and that is just as important. Our values as disciples of Jesus are on full display at the Food Pantry, Sue's Table, our preschool, and the other ministries of our church.

What were your examples of work ethics growing up? How has your work (paid or unpaid) been a partnership with God?

Let us pray:

O Holy God, may you be glorified in my life. May we glorify you in our church through all its ministries. Guide us in the use of our time, talents, and abilities so our work in your church becomes a true partnership with your work in our world. Amen.