

BreakPoint - In Celebration of Labor - The Value of a Good Day's Work



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[Value of work. Why do we work? How do we feel about work? Considering the value of types of work. Safety concerns with work.] Reformation

<http://www.breakpoint.org/Breakpoint/ChannelRoot/FeaturesGroup/BreakPointCommentaries/In+Celebration+of+Labor.htm>
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With an election year on the way, candidates are attending picnics and rallies across the nation in celebration of Labor Day. Too many will denounce the rich and pander to the fears and dissatisfaction many workers feel. *Work to many, you see, is a necessary evil.* The *goal in life is putting in enough time to retire and relax.*

[What do you think about work?

Do you agree a goal in life is to retire and relax?

Between you and me, aren't a lot of people getting their relaxing in just a little bit early?]

But that *attitude and that goal are contrary to a Christian world view perspective on work.* Christians have a special reason to celebrate Labor Day, which honors the fundamental dignity of workers, for we worship a *God who labored to make the world* -- and who created human beings in His image to be workers. When *God made Adam and Eve, He gave them work to do:* cultivating and caring for the earth.

[Did you know the attitude and goal prescribed here were contrary to a Christian world view?

If you agreed with it, and it is indeed contrary, and you are a Christian, then how do you reconcile this statement?

When I read the 2 statements about, a single word* came to mind to attribute to word. Does any word come to your mind?]

In the ancient world, the *Greeks and Romans looked upon manual work as a curse,* something for lower classes and slaves. But Christianity changed all that. *Christians viewed work as a high calling* -- a calling to be *co-workers with God* in unfolding the rich potential of His creation.

[Should the *Greeks and Romans statement* also include "all young people"?

Can work be described as a higher calling?

If yes, describe how work can be a higher calling.

Did you ever think of being a co-worker with God?

Have you ever worked on a project with others?

Did you divide the work up amongst you?

Were you not dependent upon others and others dependant upon you?

As you worked on the project, there are 2 words* which come to my mind to describe this. Do any words come to your mind?]

This high view of work can be traced throughout the history of the Church. In the **Middle Ages**, the guild movement grew out of the Church. It set standards for good workmanship and encouraged members to take **satisfaction in the results of their labor**. The guilds became the forerunner of the **modern labor movement**.

[Have you ever been proud of the results of your workmanship?

Have you ever seen a young person's art work on the refrigerator?

Does it seem accurate to say the guild movement grew out of the Church during the **Middle Ages**?]

Later, during the Reformation, **Martin Luther** preached that all work should be done to the glory of **God**. Whether ministering the **Gospel** or scrubbing floors, any honest work is pleasing to the **Lord**. Out of this conviction grew the **Protestant work ethic**.

[How can God be glorified by your work?

Is there "work" which you may do which does NOT bring glory to God?

In order for the "Protestant work ethic" to be well founded amongst ministers and janitors together, there is a principle which must be true*. What would this principle be?

Which seems to best describe a "Protestant work ethic"* is a

- 1) World view
- 2) Attitude
- 3) Valued equally (*irregardless of our occupation*)
- 4) Humility]

Christians were also active on behalf of workers in the early days of the industrial revolution, when factories were "dark satanic mills," to borrow a phrase from Sir William Blake. In those days, work in factories and coal mines was hard and dangerous. Men, women, and children were practically slaves -- sometimes even chained to machines.

[Let us suppose we have a factory which provides the livelihood for an entire community.

Is that possible? Let's get a factory and scenario in mind. What would it look like? What sort of dependencies would there be? Come to some agreement on what it would be like. One presumption is, if the factory is not in the community, then there will be no income for anyone.

Now, my question is, how many injuries requiring time off for recuperation, would be acceptable on an annual basis?

How many maiming injuries are acceptable per year? For example, a finger, a couple toes, or worse?

How many deaths, on an annual basis, are acceptable per year?

Is there something which can be done which would vary the # of acceptable

injuries, maiming, or deaths per year?

The product is so very valuable, such as nuclear submarines or synthetic blood veins?

The income pumped into the local economy provides upper middle class incomes for most everyone?

Were you surprised to hear of anyone being chained to machines?

How do you react to that? Do you believe the statement?

How can this occur in a free country?*

How can you reconcile what you have heard with your own world view or values?]

Then **John Wesley came preaching** and teaching the Gospel throughout England. He came **not to the upper classes, but to the laboring classes** -- to men whose faces were black with coal dust, women whose dresses were patched and faded.

John Wesley preached to them -- and, in the process, he **pricked the conscience of the whole nation.**



[John Wesley is the father of the Methodist Church, 1703 - 1791

The picture is John being saved by a neighbor from their burning house as 'brand plucked from the burning')]

Two of Wesley's disciples, William Wilberforce and Lord Shaftesbury, were inspired to work for legislation that would clean up abuses in the workplace. At their urging, the British parliament passed child-labor laws, safety laws, and minimum-wage laws.

[Then was then, now is now.

Were child - labor laws good laws to pass?

Then?

Now?

In our example community?

Were safety laws good laws to pass?

Then?

Now?

In our example community?

Were minimum-wage laws good laws to pass?

Then?
Now?
In our example community?]

Here in **America we've lost the Christian connection with the labor movement**. But in many countries -- from Canada to Poland -- that tradition still remains.

Much of our culture has a distinctly **Greek view of work: We work out of necessity**. But, you see, we are made in the **image of God, and as such we are made to work** -- to create, to shape, to bring order out of disorder.

So this Labor Day, remember that **all labor derives its true dignity as a reflection of the Creator**. And whatever we do, **in word or deed, we do it all to the glory of God**.

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- * Purpose.
 - * Purpose. Relationships.
 - * All of us were created, loved, and valued by God. Thus, no matter how demeaning or how lofty the work, God values us the same. All that matters is our attitude in doing this work.
 - * A view of life that promotes hard work and self-discipline as a means to material prosperity. It is called Protestant because some Protestant groups believe that such prosperity is a sign of God's grace. (The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition. 2002)
 - * One way is bondage through debt.



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