**Real Work**

Since the fall of man, mankind has had to work. In Genesis 3, God states that we will work by the sweat of our brow to eat and provide for life. Whether it is working in the field, working in the office, working in the home, there is work to be done. Lots of it.

And because there is so much work to do, sometimes we can become consumed with our work. We place our work and our responsibilities before everything. It is extremely difficult no matter what profession you have to find a balance in your work, of not letting your work become who you are and what you are about. For many of us, work becomes exhausting and we resent our work, for others it brings fulfillment and maybe even purpose. But the truth is, all of us work. The purpose behind that work is what makes all the difference.

We are not alone in work. God works, Jesus works, the Holy Spirit works. In fact the triune God is presented as relentlessly working *for us*. Pursuing us like a shepherd who has lost a lamb, working for our good, the works of God’s hand are described as marvelous, wonderful, and mighty. The works of God bring about change in our hearts, change in our community, and change in our world.

**[TESTIMONY here]**

Philippians 2:13 states, ***13”****for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”* To will here refers to our intention and faith, which is to be aligned to God. And God’s desire is for our intention or faith to never be separated from our actions. Faith and work go hand in hand, not when it comes to salvation, but when it comes to God’s good purpose.

Because of Christ’s death and resurrection we have been made right with God. Paul says in verses 14-15, **14*“****Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ““children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.”* We are children of God and we are called to work in a way that is different than a job or a career, our work is to shine like lights in this universe.

The work of Christ is what has made us lights. His work has done it all, and His work alone. Now the Real Work that we do is to reflect and direct that light. We reflect that light in our lives, not by grumbling or complaining, but by letting the world see the love of Christ that is in us, the hope that carries us, the joy that fills us, and the love that can’t help but blaze forth from us in our words and actions. Along with that our purpose and work is to direct that light of Christ towards our neighbor in love, sharing Christ with our service and resources.

Not only are we lights by our works of love, but also by telling others the message of the Gospel. Paul mentions 2 people in chapter 2, Timothy and Epaphroditus, whose work of spreading the gospel brings glory to Christ, brings joy to fellow believers, and highlights how those who do the work of the Gospel look out for the very interests of Jesus Christ. All of us are workers of Christ, telling and living out the Gospel.

Verse 12 states, “***12****Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”* This is not us working for our salvation but can be compared to the way we eat and exercise to remain healthy and strong. God’s word and his Sacraments are our spiritual food and strength and we work out the gift of salvation by hearing and reading God’s word, faithfully taking the sacraments, loving our neighbor and fighting against sin, temptation, and every evil plan of the devil. This working out of our salvation is not done in fear or anxiety of God, as if our salvation depends on what we do, but instead with confidence, we gladly do the real work of living according to God’s good purpose in response to his love. This verse is pure gospel, reminding us that our dependence is on God for our salvation and he will never disappoint us, but by the working of his word and sacrament he promises to enable us to keep on doing the real work of loving and spreading the gospel.