

Sermon Title: **A Christian Viewpoint of Labor Day**¹

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Scripture Reference: **1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12**

Thesis: **Christians are to work as if we are working directly for God because we are.**

Purpose: **Today, we will focus on the right attitude for a Christian worker.**

Key Word: "Labor"

I) Introduction: Scripture Reading is: **1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12**

A) The Setting:

- 1) **As we celebrate this Labor Day Weekend I thought it would be good for us to take a look at why we have this day.**
 - (a) If you think about it, Labor Day is a strange holiday.
 - (b) While we call it "Labor Day," we try to do as little labor as possible;
 - (c) and most working people have the day off.
 - (d) It is the unofficial day to celebrate the end of summer.
- 2) **Nobody has wished me a "Happy Labor Day".**
 - (a) We don't get any Labor Day cards.
 - (b) We don't decorate the house, or give Labor Day gifts.
 - (c) The florists and greeting card manufacturers haven't found a way to capitalize on it.
 - (d) It's a bad weekend for a Church because everyone wants to travel.
- 3) **Labor Day is different things to different people.**
 - (a) To the factory or office worker, it may be a day off.
 - (b) For policemen, who deal with extra traffic and alcohol abuse, it can be a tough day.
 - (c) To farmers and ranchers, it's just another day to feed the cattle and work in the fields.
 - (d) And for preachers, it is an opportunity to talk about work.
- 4) **What does Labor Day mean to you?**
 - (a) What should Labor Day mean to us as Christians?
 - (b) It is not a religious Holiday; so, why should a Christian celebrate Labor?
 - (c) **Well, believe it or not, God does have a thing or two to say on the subject.**
 - (d) So, we are going to examine Labor Day from a Christian viewpoint.
- 5) **I found this message a number of years ago and thought it would be good to share with you today.**
 - (a) The basic message, titled "Labor Day Weekend Sermon" by David Rigg,
 - (b) Was adapted and edited by me adding here and there.
- 6) **So, with that introduction, let us turn in our Bibles to 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.**

1 Thessalonians. 4:11 (Black 204 Red 249) "**to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you,**"

2 Thessalonians. 3:10-12 (Black 207; Red 252) "**10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work, should not eat. 11 For we hear that that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietly and to earn their own living.**"

B) Sermon Prayer

C) (The Hook)

- 1) **Illustration: Topic: Work Title: Helpful Adjustment**²
 - (a) A child's father kept bringing home office work just about every night.
 - (b) Finally, his first-grade son asked why.
 - (c) Daddy explained that he had so much work he couldn't finish it all during the day.
 - (d) The boy reasoned, "Then why don't they put you in a slower group?"

- 2) **The fact is that Work is a very important part of God's will for people.**
- 3) I have another true story for you today!
- 4) **The U.S.S. Astoria was the first U.S. cruiser ship to engage the Japanese during the Battle of Savo Island in World War II.** It was a night action fought August 8th and 9th in 1942. Although the Astoria scored two hits on the Imperial flagship Chokai, she was badly damaged and sank shortly after noon on August 9th. About 2:00 that morning, a young Midwesterner, Signalman 3rd Class Elgin Staples, was swept overboard by the blast when the Astoria's number one eight-inch gun turret exploded. Wounded in both legs by shrapnel and in semi-shock, Staples was kept afloat by a narrow life belt that he managed to activate with a simple trigger mechanism.
- 5) We'll have more of that true story a little later!

TS: **The first thing I want us to see is that . . .**

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **God has always honored and provided work.**

- 1) **Genesis 2:2** *By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so, on the seventh day he rested from all his work.*
 - (a) God is a worker Himself and appreciates rest.
 - (b) He created us in His image and gave us work to do.
 - (c) And we should have periods of rest both for the good of the body and for times to appreciate and for worship of God.
- 2) **Genesis 2:15** *The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*
 - (a) From the very beginning, God gave men work to do.
 - (b) Work is a gift from God that was intended to be a blessing and for our benefit.
 - (c) Work only became difficult after sin entered the picture.
- 3) **When Jesus came to earth, God honored work:**
 - (a) His birth was first told to working shepherds;
 - (b) **Luke 2:8** *"Now there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flock at night."*
- 4) **Jesus learned a trade as a carpenter.**

Mark 6:3 *"Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's Son, and brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? Aren't His sisters here with us?"*

 - (a) Jesus was known as a carpenter!
 - (b) He worked with His hands in Joseph's carpenter shop.
- 5) **Jesus chose working men as His disciples.**
 - (a) Peter, Andrew, James & John were fishermen; Matthew who was a tax collector.
 - (b) **The Bible doesn't tell us what the other disciples did for a living;**
 - (c) However, I think it is safe to say that they all had jobs.
- 6) **Jesus called them from their labors to become "fishers of men".**
 - (a) And Jesus told His disciples in **Luke 10:7** *Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*
 - (b) **What was Jesus saying to them?**
 - (i) He didn't want them going out begging from house to house.
 - (ii) Jesus expected His disciples to earn their keep!
- 7) **So why do so many people think of work as something bad?**
 - (a) Because sin caused work to be unpleasant.
 - (b) **Genesis 3** says
 - (i) **17** *To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.*

- (ii) ***18It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.***
- (iii) ***19By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."***

(c) Adam enjoyed tending the Garden of Eden until sin changed things.

- (i) Work has always been a part of God's plan for us;
 - (ii) It is supposed to be a blessing; something that gives us purpose and fulfillment.
 - (iii) And when we get to heaven we will all have work to do.
- 8) **We think work is a necessary evil.**
- (a) If we don't have to do work, many will choose not to do it!
 - (b) Some people work harder at doing as little as possible than if they just did the job.
 - (c) The world's idea seems to be to get more money for doing less work!
 - (d) This leads to the idea of letting someone else do the work for you.
- 9) **Some people choose to be employers.**
- (a) They hire other people as employees to do the work.
 - (b) **In America, "labor" and "management" are adversaries.**
 - (i) Labor wants the most money for the least work.
 - (ii) Management wants the most work for the least money.
 - (iii) This creates an adversarial relationship.
- 10) **How many of you had chores to do when you were a kid?**
- (a) Have you noticed that kids today won't do chores?
 - (b) They expect Mom and Dad to just give them money!
 - (c) We are raising a generation that doesn't want to work.
 - (d) They expect things to be given to them for doing nothing!
- 11) **Illustration: Topic Work Title: Raising Boys³**
- (a) The late Adrian Rogers, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, told about a man who made his sons work in the cornfields while their peers spent the afternoon at the swimming hole.
 - (b) Someone scolded the father saying, "Why do you make those boys work so hard? You don't need all that corn."
 - (c) The wise father replied, "**Sir, I'm not raising corn. I'm raising boys.**"
- 12) **Work builds character and teaches us the value of hard labor.**
- (a) Back to the Astoria:
 - (b) At around 6:00 that same morning, Signalman 3rd Class Elgin Staples was rescued by a passing destroyer and returned to the Astoria, whose captain was attempting to save the cruiser by beaching her, meaning they were deliberately trying to run the ship aground. The effort failed, and Staples, still wearing the same life belt, found himself back in the water.
More of that story later!
 - (c) God has always honored and provided work;

TS: **Which leads to our second point that . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **The American work system is not the Christian way.**

1) **Ephesians 6:5-9** says:

⁵Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, ⁸because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. ⁹And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

2) **Do those verses describe most work places?**

- (a) Slavery has been abolished, but many workers think they are treated like slaves!

- (b) While there are good employers; many employers have attitudes like a master, treating their employees like slaves.
- 3) **God cares about how we conduct our business and how we treat others.**
- (a) We will all face judgment, both employers and employees.
- (b) The Christian cannot separate his business from his spiritual life.
- (c) He has no right to act like the heathen Monday through Friday.
- (d) The Christian does not live for self alone.
- (e) Our work is an opportunity to help others to see Christ living in us.
- (f) **Ephes. 4:28** says: ***He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.***
- 4) **What if we all did like some of the Christians in Thessalonica were doing?**
- (a) Refusing to earn any money... they would not be able to give to the church.
- (b) The church could not pay its bills or help people truly in need!
- 5) **Maybe they think the Government should provide food regardless of whether you work or not.**
- (a) That was not God's plan in the beginning and
- (b) It certainly is not God's plan now.
- 6) **It was close to 12 Noon when Navy seaman Staples was picked up again, this time by the U.S.S. President Jackson. He was one of 500 survivors of the battle who were evacuated to Noumea. Safely on board the ship, for the first time, Staples closely examined the life belt that had served him so well. It had been manufactured by Firestone Tire and Rubber Company of Akron, Ohio, and it bore a registration number. We'll get to the climax of this story in just a moment!**

TS: **Our third point is that . . .**

- C) Key Point #3: **The Christian is to do the best they can for others.**
- 1) **Colossians 3:22-24**, ²²***Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.***
- (a) Christian employees should do more than expected because they work for the Lord.
- (b) Christian employers do the best, not the least they can for their employees because they also have a master.
- 2) **Here's a question for you:**
- (a) Suppose a Christian has a \$150 job to be done and two men are willing to do it.
- (b) One man will do the job for \$150 and one for \$100.
- (c) Which person should the Christian hire?
- 3) **Well, the Christian employer is free to hire either man.**
- (a) **However, he should still pay \$150.**
- (b) If that is what the job is worth; then that's what the man is worth.
- 4) **Jesus says in Matthew 7:12 *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.***
- (a) If a Christian employee can get by with shoddy work he has no right to do so.
- (b) For he is working for the Lord and not just an employer or himself.
- (c) Christians should realize that people are more important than property.
- (d) The Bible tells us repeatedly that we are ***to love one another.***
- 5) **Listen again to Colossians 3: 23 & 24**
- (a) ²³ ***Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,***
- (b) ²⁴ ***since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.***
- 6) **Did you catch that there are rewards for doing a good job!**

- 7) Given home leave, Navy seaman Staples told his story and asked his mother, who worked for Firestone, about the purpose of the number on the belt. She replied that the company insisted on personal responsibility for the war effort, and that the number was unique and assigned to only one inspector. Staples remembered everything about the lifebelt, and quoted the number. It was his own mother's personal code that she affixed to every item she was responsible for approving. Do you suppose Mrs. Staples was glad that she had performed well on her job?
- 8) We should care about everything we do as if the life of our sons and daughter depends on it . . . because it just might!

TS: **So, what can we take away from our study today?**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **It pays both in this life and the life to come to do our very best!**

- 1) How we carry our Christian principles into our work and life is important.
- 2) **Our work performance becomes a Christian ministry.**
 - (a) Weather it is as an employee and an employer
 - (b) A Teacher
 - (c) A Firefighter
 - (d) A Farmer
 - (e) A Mill worker
 - (f) A Volunteer
 - (g) A Retiree
 - (h) A member of the church serving on a committee
- 3) **Do it all as if you are doing it for GOD!**
 - (a) This will give your work new meaning and dignity.
 - (b) We can't claim to be Christians if our Christianity is only a one-day a week affair.
 - (c) God does care what you do Monday through Friday whether you are an employee or employer.
 - (d) We as Christians should also be willing to give a hand up to those who need.
 - (e) Goodwill calls it a hand up; not a hand out.
 - (f) There is great encouragement in helping those who are truly in need.

B) **This Labor Day Weekend . . .**

- 1) Let's be thankful for the health to do our work that the Lord has given to us!
- 2) **And let's be thankful for ways God allows us to serve**
 - (a) Each other
 - (b) And Him
- 3) Let's do our work to the best of our abilities!

C) **Let us Pray!**

IV) Bibliography

¹ This message was developed largely using a message titled "**Labor Day Weekend Sermon**" by David Rigg, sermoncentral.com: August 2008

² 1001 Humorous Illustrations, Michael Hodgin, Zondervan, Grand Raids, Michigan, 1992, 1994 #999

³ 1001 Humorous Illustrations, Michael Hodgin, Zondervan, Grand Raids, Michigan, 1992, 1994 #1000