

Humbly Serving  
Luke 17:7-10

As I read this passage that we'll study today, my thoughts go to all the many years that I have worked, first in the military, then as a banker and lastly as an accountant and business manager in the ministry to youth at French Camp. And also, during those years while employed at French Camp, the Lord very generously saw fit to allow me to also serve for 24 years as a Pastor of two churches.

Now being retired, I remember well both the accomplishments and the travails that I encountered along the way.

And yes, I did truly enjoy my work, especially after I began to realize the real reason why I was doing it. And that is the important part of the message that God has for us within this passage that we'll study today.

In my earliest years of work, I really did not have the right understanding about it, its purpose, and my purpose in it. Work then was a means to an end. I needed money to pay the bills and work was my avenue towards that end. It paid the bills.

It was only after I was given the privilege of coming to know the Lord Jesus as my Savior that I began to understand the real meaning of the matters of this life, and among them, the attitude and the appreciation that I was supposed to have for that thing called "work". And when I did, so many, many things about my workday began to change, yes, slowly at first, but more and more as I grew in my knowledge of the Lord and my love for Him.

Before I go much further, may I stop and read the passage of scripture that the Lord Jesus has given to us here in Luke chapter 17. Here beginning in verse 7, Jesus said,

7 "Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? 8 Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were

commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.' " (Luke 17:7-10)

A thought before we begin our consideration of these words of scripture . . . It's a thought that I have shared with you on other occasions, and one that I would like for you to join me in today.

And that is the recognition and the understanding that all the many things that take place in life each day are never just random occurrences, coincidences, happenstance. That instead to recognize that it is God's hand guiding and directing most all that takes place.

Some time ago, I began asking the Lord to allow me to see more of what He was doing within all those common matters of my daily life, to allow me to recognize "His Providential Hand", His careful orchestration of all those many occurrences and the circumstances that take place in and around me each day. And for me to know quickly and with confidence that it was by His design that those things were taking place. And thankfully, He has been gracious to me and has done that often of late.

And this matter that Jesus is telling us about here in today's scripture passage will be one of those opportunities. Here in these words today, Jesus has given us some deep insights into one of the most common of daily involvements of our life, that of work. Work! And here, He is asking us to consider our own attitudes, our desires, our commitments toward this very, very important part of our daily lives, and especially towards the ones we serve, our employer and then even and especially our family members . . . our family members.

Implicit within these words are questions that each of us ought to consider, questions like, "why do I work, for whom do I work, what is my attitude towards those for whom I work, what is it that I am trying to accomplish as I work, is work a means to an end, or is it even sometimes an end in itself". And the questions go on and on, many questions that really ought to be brought to the surface for each of us to consider, because work and all the matters that concern it really are essential to our daily lives.

And if we truly do call ourselves by the name "Christian" our work really ought to be done in a manner that will bless and honor all those involved, first of all Christ

the Lord, then our family members, then our employer, and then our own personal heart and soul.

Thinking back on my years there in the ministry at French Camp, we would often have visiting speakers bring special encouraging messages at our staff meetings. On one occasion, one of those speakers presented a question involving our work asking, "Are you a "great achiever" or are you instead a "grateful receiver?" And he quoted the words from James chapter 1,

<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:16-17)

These words from our Lord may not at first seem relevant to today scripture text, but they really are. The question again, as applied to me personally, "Have I, over my lifetime, sought to be a "great achiever" or have I instead sought to be a "grateful receiver?"

These words go to the heart of why and how you and I go about the work that we do every day. They reach in and determine what is at the core of our understanding about this matter of work.

Consider the contrast within those words for a moment, the contrast between being a "great achiever" and that of being a "grateful receiver".

Yes, the words of our scripture passage seem to speak more directly to our wanting to sit down at the end of the day's work and to be fed by our own servants. But contrastingly, our first concern more often is, do we even consider going home to tend to matters there, or do we instead choose to remain in the workplace, doing those things?

The "American Success System mentality", that so consumes and controls our minds demands that throughout our work lives we reach to be "great achievers", to strive to accomplish things, some great, some small, but always achieving.

And we are often so consumed with those things that we hardly have time to take part in the matters of home and family, often putting in long hours,

deserting our dearest loved ones for the lure of some idea or philosophy about “success” and “accomplishments” and “titles after our names” and on and on.

But God tells us clearly within these scriptures that yes, work has its place. And yes we ought to do it, and do it well. But not usually for the reasons that we do it, and usually not in the manner that we do it.

Using the words of Romans 11 as a foundation for these thoughts, we ought to regularly give close consideration to our own personal reasons and purposes and desires regarding our work. Those words in Romans 11, speaking about the Lord Jesus,

<sup>36</sup> For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)

The meaning behind these words as it relates to matters of work and employment and family are simple. The reason that we have the availability of work, our job, is because of Him, the Lord Jesus. And the ability we have to accomplish that work, also comes from Him, the Lord Jesus. Even the reason why we desire to work and the things we hope to accomplish within that work must come from Him, the Lord Jesus and then be for Him, the Lord Jesus.

Another verse from these scriptures that speaks the same words about our work is in Colossians chapter 3. There we read,

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24)

All that we do in life, and especially as it relates to such matters as work, really must be done in the right way and for the right purposes, for Him, the Lord Jesus, and through Him, the Lord Jesus, and to Him, the Lord Jesus. If we lose sight of those purposes, or never have them to begin with, then everything will surely be out of focus.

And it is God's desire that we know and accept that our work, and the ability to do it, truly is a gift from Him. Those words again from James chapter 1,

<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down

from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:16-17)

May I say again and emphatically so, that our work is truly a gift from God. And as such, our work ought to be a joy to us as we go about doing it each day.

One of the things that I love to do as I read the precious words given within these scriptures is to quietly listen carefully for the nuances of the words. The plainly given truths yes, but also the truths that are being inferred by what is being said. And that is so with the words of our scripture passage for today. Within these words, Jesus is inferring that we as workers are to go about accomplishing our work with a heart of humility. Humility! The kind of humility that is within the heart of a true servant.

Whether it be in our workplace, or in our home or anywhere else, our heart attitude should be that of a humble servant.

And may I give emphasis to these words and say that our servanthood must not cease at the doorway of our place of employment, as it so often does, especially for us men. But servanthood should, must, extend on long after all the matters of the workday are finished, on into our homes and families and then on out into our churches and into our neighborhoods.

And may I ask each one of us to pause here and think about what actually does take place in our daily routine. And especially, those of us who are married, what do we do when our workday has ended.

In my house, for many of my working years, my wife often worked as long and as hard as I did. But yet, as a humble servant, she immediately upon arriving at home went about doing just as this servant in this scripture passage was instructed to do.

She continued to remember who she served and she went about preparing our meals. And yes, I would help her with some of it, but it was her desire to be the one most responsible for the meal. A true humble servant.

Did she at the time fully understand all that was taking place in her humble servant nature? I don't know, but it has been a joy to watch her and to know that she was doing exactly what the Lord intended.

Yes, many people, some of them men, but most of them women have done exactly the same thing that my wife did. They would also work hard and then come home at the end of the workday only to begin all over again serving their family.

And many of them do it for the right reasons, but unfortunately, I would suspect that many do not. I fear that their motives are probably more often from a sense of duty. And perhaps they often even become grudging and resentful.

And also unfortunately, most of the husbands and children probably take mom's servanthood for granted. And they probably even sometimes complain about some of the things she is doing, the choice of the food she serves, the way it tastes, and on and on. And that is so sad, so very sad. It is never right to mistreat our servants.

Looking back on all my working years, as I recall the precious servant nature within the heart of my dear wife and I contrast it to my own nature, I must admit that I often feel greatly ashamed. Because I am convinced that for too much of my life, I have lived a misconception about work and about the place that work ought to occupy within the priorities of my life.

Too often, instead of understanding that work itself, and all of the things within it, are truly a gift from God, I viewed work as a task to be performed.

Instead of understanding that in my work I am simply to go about accomplishing the things that God intends for me to accomplish, too often I have been a man with my own agenda, always reaching to be a "great achiever".

And in the eyes of the "American Success System", I have probably done well. But now, at the end of my working career, as I look back, and especially through the eyeglasses of the Lord Jesus, I can see that many, many of my accomplishments were little more than a "chasing after the wind".

That which my dear wife accomplished with her simple, loving servanthood really has far exceeded my, more public achievements. She has blessed a family in which her children really have risen up and called her blessed.

What a waste of our lives when we spend so much of our time chasing after some perceived idea of success when all along the real and necessary accomplishments of life are far more simple, and most often "right within our own home".

And for myself, as I look back on my employment, regrettably, I do not know that I have ever fully accepted the position of servant. Yes, I have always known that I am employed by someone else, supervised by a boss and dictated to on many occasions.

But sadly, in retrospect, I believe that I have mostly only tolerated those masters and their positions above me. If I take time to really consider my inmost attitude, I will probably find that, in my own mind, I was always my own master.

Perhaps that is why within our American Success System we have the adversarial roles of unions and management. Unions seem to be a voice that says back to the master, "no one will be a master over me". I am on an equal footing with everyone. In that voice, there is no humility, no true servanthood.

I don't mean to blame the unions. Unions are only one of many means by which misguided servant behavior is carried forward. Unfortunately, the whole of our culture is corrupted. And at the end of most workdays, we all go home to a house without any servants in it at all. Yes, everyone gets fed and into bed, but often not in the way that God intends.

And yes, as we lie there in the bed, we might be able to look back on our day and point to one or more really important achievements within it. But what have we really gained by those achievements.

"What does it profit a man, or a woman, if we gain the whole world, but lose our own soul", and sometimes, our family and our children? Too often, that successful man or woman is lying there in bed with their second or third attempt at marriage. And their children live in someone else's home.

And all we really have to cling to for comfort are our many "achievements" and perhaps some "title" that is attached to our name.

Now, I don't really mean to paint such a bleak picture, because it really does not have to be the way that it is. There are real answers to be had for our dilemma.

But for those answers to really work out right, our daily response to life must be as God intends. And let me again quote the verses I gave us a few moments ago. They give us that which is essential to any real success that we might hope for.

First, we must really want all that we do, whether at work or at home to be as unto the Lord Jesus.

<sup>36</sup> For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)

And as we work, whether it be at our place of employment or at home,  
23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24)

As I mentioned in a recent study, the songwriter, Bob Dylan, once wrote, "You are going to serve somebody". And he was prophetically correct. We truly will serve somebody.

Why not serve the ones God intends for us to serve, Him first, then our families, and then on out into all the venues God provides, our churches, our workplaces, our communities. And if we serve "as unto Christ" we will surely have success beyond all measure. And we will never tire as we do it.

These words of our Lord given in Colossians 3 as we close.

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24)

Pray with me.