

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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The Good Life

PART

6

TITLE

Working Diligently

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 6:6-11; 13:4; 21:25; 24:30-34; 26:16



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Well good morning Providence. It is a joy to be gathered with you guys this day, and if you are visiting with us for the first time today you might see from the video, that we are in the book of Proverbs. We're a couple of weeks in to a series on The Good Life and what living in light of God's wisdom means. And today, we get to look at this idea of work, and we're going to focus on work.

I realized this morning that some of you, even thinking about and saying the word, that some of you are anxious because you know in less than 24 hours you're going to return to a job that you dislike. You already are distracted today because of what's on your plate for tomorrow, and you dread your vocation like an unprepared kid dreads a test in school.

Some of you are here, and you hit this past Friday afternoon like this picture on the screen. You live for the weekends, right? You work hard to afford all the toys that you can't wait to use when Saturday rolls around. And when that clock goes off on Friday, you're out the door.

Some of you though, the reality is, some of you love what you do. You can't wait for tomorrow. In fact, if we're honest you've worked all weekend. You've put 80 plus hours of work into the week already, and you pride yourself in what you have accomplished.

And some of you, you have one goal in mind, retirement. Right? You're working for the end of work. You check your 401K daily, and as soon as it hits whatever that goal is that you have, you're out of there. Right?

So the reality is for all of us though, that we can't escape the idea of work in our culture. In some shape, form, or fashion, it's a necessity. And the word work, and the thought of it, it can create anxiety, or anger, or depression, or despair, or excitement, or joy. And as a people who claim that we follow God, and we want to hear from him, then we have to ask what does God say about work? What does God have to say about this thing that is a part of all of our lives?

What we're going to do this morning is we're going to turn our attention primarily to Proverbs chapter 6 verses 6-11, but we're actually going to look at several places in the Proverbs that speak to work and speak to another end of the spectrum, which the scriptures call laziness, and see what God has to say here.

But before we do, let me pray and then we'll hop right in to the word of God.

Father, thank you for your grace to us. I thank you that you give us your word. You don't leave us in the dark about really, honestly, about anything in life. That you put it all out there for us, and that it's there for our taking. It's there for our consumption. It's there for our good. So God, as we open your word today and we look at this idea of work, God would you help us to see the truthfulness in it? To see you in it? And not only that, but God as you help us to think rightly about it, will you help us in to put into practice what we read? So that we might see that you in fact call us to a good life, and that it's found in you.

So God, even in these moments as we turn our hearts toward your word, would you speak through your word? Would you give us grace to hear and understand? We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

So Proverbs chapter 6 verses 6-11, this is what Solomon writes, "Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, any officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber; a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

So why, when Solomon writes of work to his son, why does he capture the idea of the ant? We got on the screen here a picture of an ant. A small creature, but a remarkable creature, in strength and in intentionality. And we got to ask a question, when God puts something in the bible, why does he put it there? Why does Solomon focus on the ant?

I think it's primarily for this reason. The ant works without coercion. It works because it was made to work, and in working not only does it fulfill a portion of what it was created to do, but God, in his grace, provides through the ant doing the very thing it was made to do. And I think that Solomon points us toward the ant in Proverbs, with this reality in mind. We likewise, should not need to be convinced to work. We were made for it, and yet often we need an incentive to do it.

So what does God teach us as we consider work, and laziness in a minute? What does he teach us in his word about it? Well I think first of all, we have to come to a place where we understand that work is part of God's good design.

Work is part of God's good design. In Genesis chapter 1 verse 28, in the creation of the world when he gets to man this is what the bible tells us about the creation of mankind, "God blessed them. And he said to the, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." God made man and gave him a job. He said this is your job. You're my representative in the world that I have made. You're to rule over it. You're to be my representative and steward the things that are there. And so work, by the very creation of Adam and Eve and the giving of a task, God shows us that work in and of itself is actually good.

He goes on to tell us in Genesis 2 verse 15, that he took man, he put him in the garden. And what did he put him in the garden for? To work and to keep it. So work was a part of God's good design.

Not only that, but work in this good design, I think that there are two things that we can say about work. And the first is this, that work is meant to be an act of worship. At its core, worship is serving God in love and in trustful obedience to his work, and to his word. So worship is at the core of work. Work is meant to be an act of this.

So why does it matter? Well we were created to work. We see it in Genesis chapter 1 and we see it in Genesis chapter 2, that God made man to work. But before he made man to work, guess what? We were created. And that, in and of itself, gives rise to worship. We were made.

And by default, we were made to reflect the glory of the one who made us. We were made in his image, but we were made to reflect the glory of the one who made us, and that's true of all of creation. Everything made, everything made, should point a finger back to the one who made it, and display the maker's glory. It's why, in Romans 1, Paul tells us that God's invisible attributes, namely his eternal power, he created. God's eternal power and his divine nature, his goodness, his creativity, had been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

It all points toward him. And ultimately, that's what we were made for. When we look at the picture, a beautiful picture of art or a sculpture, we don't praise the painting or the sculpture as if it made itself. We might marvel at its beauty, but it causes us to turn our attention toward the giftedness and the talent of the one who made it. It causes us to honor the one that made it, and it's true of us as well. We were made primarily to reflect the glory of the one who made us. By our design, we were meant to give all of life as an act of worship, and work flows out of that.

Proverbs 16 verses 1-3 say, that the plans of the heart belong to the man but the answer of the tongue is the Lord's. All the ways of man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit and then he kind of captivates all of that thought by saying this, commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established.

Solomon knew that our work was meant to be worshiped back to the one that made us. Paul understood that as well, in Colossians 3 verse 23 says, whatever you do work heartily as for the Lord, and not for men.

So work was a part of God's good creation, and it was meant to be an act of worship. It was meant to be a delight. But it was also meant to be a means of God's provision. So work was supposed to be an act of worship, but God, by his grace and in his design, work actually provides. God provides for us through work. God's good plan, work, is one of the ways that he provides for us. This was reality before the fall.

In Genesis 1:29, after he makes man and tells him that you're to have dominion over creation, that you're supposed to be my steward and rule in my place, be my representative on the world and to work the garden. He says, behold I've given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. And you shall have them for food.

So God, by design, made the work that he called Adam and Eve to do, be provisional for them. And that was before the fall. A good part of God's design was that work would be an act of worship and provisional. And it's certainly true after the fall, as well.

A little bit later in Proverbs in chapter 12, Solomon says these words, "Whoever is slothful, will not roast his game, but the diligent man will gain precious treasure." Now what is he saying here? The man who works intentionally will be provided for. God makes work a means of provision, but provision is not the primary purpose of work. That might actually cause us to step back, but it's not.

We shouldn't need to be convinced of work, because we were made for it. It's inherent in our design. Meaning this, the reward of our work is not that we are rewarded for our work.

Let me say that again. The reward of our work is not that we are rewarded for our work, but that our work is in and of itself rewarding because we were made to do it. That it's an act of worship. Work is not the curse, despite how we may feel tomorrow morning. Work is not the curse. Sin is the curse. Sin made work hard. Sin effected all of creation, including work.

It might surprise us. Not only that work isn't the primary purpose of work is not provision, but it also might surprise us that work is not primarily about compensation. This is why we can say, without reservation, that an admonition to work is not primarily an urging to get a job, although that may very well be what you need to do. Work, in it's biblical sense as we see it inlaid in the early pages of scripture, is what God does and God creates. And we were a product of his work, and we were given the gift of being able to mirror that as well.

So we are a reflection of our creator. We're made to create. When we work, as we are made to do, we honor the one who made us. But not all work is fulfilling in this way, and the reason why is because of the product of our work. The product of our work, if we are doing it in line with how God has made us, should be good because God's work was good. He says it over and over and over again in the first chapter of Genesis. He created and he looked on what he made, and it was good.

He created and he looked on what he made, and it was good. And part of the grace of God to us, is that in our work that we too should do good. That means, if you are a baker that you bake good food. If you're an artist, that you make good art. If you're a teacher, that you give good instruction. And just generally, whatever you do that it would be for good; that it would benefit the world, and other people.

Because this is true, because part of our work is that it's good and it's meant to bless. It actually means that work is more about what we give, then what we receive. And that kind of stiff arms the cultures idea, that work is about our compensation and what we get for it. God made us to work in order to worship him, and to work to create good and be a blessing.

Likewise, success then is not primarily about financial gain, although it may be a measure of your diligence and your effectiveness. That's part of God's provision. Material wealth can not be the primary goal of our work, though it may be the effectual result of it.

When acquiring wealth, overshadows worship. Work becomes an idol. That's why we have to see work, first and foremost, as an act of worship to the one who made us and gave it to us.

Work is a part of God's good design, and it's meant to be a source of satisfaction and provision. That's why the book of Proverbs urges us to work. It urges us to do honest, respectful, generous, diligent work because all of those things reflect the character of the one who made us. So work is part of God's good design. It's primarily about a heart of worship to him, in the things that we do, and it says a life of wisdom embraces good work.

The picture of the ant. He points at the ant and says, "The ant is doing what it was made to do, and that's how we should be." But the book of Proverbs also says, that wisdom urges us to resist something. And he calls it laziness, and this is the contrasting picture of Proverbs 6.

The contrasting picture of the ant, is the one who is a sluggard who is lazy. Laziness seems to be at the core of the characteristics of the person that is called a sluggard, throughout the book of Proverbs. And the writer of Proverbs has a lot to say about laziness.

So before we take a stroll through some of Proverbs and look at a picture that it paints of laziness, I want to point us back to this idea that we have to start with work being an act of worship. And I want to set up a view of laziness through the lens of worship, because only then will we understand why the bible contrasts it.

You see laziness, despite what we might think, laziness is not necessarily inactivity. When I say lazy you get a picture of someone who's on his couch all day long, right? Never gets up. And that might be a picture of laziness, but laziness is not necessarily inactivity. Fundamentally, laziness is resistance to God's good design. It's rebellion against God. And laziness is actually, it's disobedience toward God and obedience towards something else. It's less about what we aren't doing and more about what we're choosing to worship.

Misplaced worship, means we value the wrong thing, and what we treasure in our heart will shape what we say and what we do. So the lazy person, in the bible, actually has a worship problem.

It's really possible, in our day, that a man who is lazy, lazy in his heart, actually works 60 plus hours a week, comes home, props his feet up in his easy chair, while his wife finishes supper, finishes up homework, gets the kids bathed, and gets them in bed. Guys hear me, if this is you please see the most important work that you will do all day long isn't the job that you came home from, it's the one that you came home to. Because work is not primarily about compensation. It's about worship of the one who made us, and fulfilling that calling in what we do.

When we misunderstand work, we believe that our reward for our labor is our personal comfort. Do you hear all the personal pronouns? Our reward for our labor is our personal comfort, usually at the expense of others who we expect to work to provide it for us.

When we see our contribution primarily about compensation, that anything else in life that doesn't have a wage attached to it, just isn't that important. Unless of course, it's what we're working so hard, in a vocation, to be able to afford. So we'll sink dollars and hours into pursuit of hobbies, to the neglect of things that are more important, our families, God's work and the context of the church, things that matter.

Now don't get me wrong, please hear me. Hobbies are not wrong. There is certainly a place for enjoyment and rest, in God's economy. But the sluggard in the scripture, worships personal comfort over everything else.

When personal comfort is what is worshiped, it's a hollow pursuit. It promises the moon, but in the end it simply can not deliver.

Laziness, at it's core, is misdirected desire. The lazy man delights in his personal comfort. That's why Proverbs 13:4 says, "The soul of the sluggard craves and craves but gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent man is richly supplied."

So what does Proverbs tell us about laziness, just a few things that some Proverbs scattered throughout the book, help us to get a picture of what this heart that's bent toward, ultimately toward personal comfort, what it looks like. And there are four things I want you guys to see.

One, laziness values leisure over labor, or sleep instead of sweat. Most of the places in the Proverbs where we see this idea of laziness, speak of a man who has a hard time getting out of bed because it paints a really contrasted picture between one who will work. But we know that laziness is not necessarily inactivity, yet what it is is a pursuit of leisure over intentional work. Laziness works hard to pursue personal comfort, and in void meaningful work.

So in Proverbs 12 Solomon says, "Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread," So the wise man works and God's provision comes from that, "But he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense." So the lazy man, in Proverbs 12, isn't not doing something. He's pouring all of his effort into the wrong thing.

Proverbs 26:14 is a, what a great picture, “As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard in his bed.” Rolls over, back in right? So this idea that he’s more concerned with the wrong things, and he pours his effort, he works really hard, to satisfy his personal comfort.

So laziness values leisure over labor. Laziness also makes excuses to avoid responsibility. Proverbs 22:12 Solomon says that, “The sluggard says, there’s a lion outside. I shall be killed in the streets.” Now why does the sluggard say that? Because he doesn’t want to go outside. He makes up an excuse because I can’t go ... There’s several Proverbs in a row, and basically the principle there is, the man won’t do what he’s supposed to do. He won’t go and work as he’s called to do, and he makes up an excuse for it. And it’s a crazy excuse, there’s not a lion outside. But he’s convinced himself in his mind, that there’s a reason why he can’t complete the thing that he knows he’s supposed to do. So a lazy man makes excuses simply to avoid responsibility.

The next thing that he does, is laziness actually expects gain without effort. So laziness leads us to expect reward with no effort.

Proverbs 20 verse 4 says, “The sluggard does not plow in autumn.” Autumn is a time, you got to take care of gathering, putting your hand to a task. So he’s not plowing to prepare for what’s to come, and then the Proverb goes on to say, “He will seek at harvest and have nothing.” He expects a gain, with no effort. And the scriptures say, this is laziness. This is personal comfort with no effort, and that’s what laziness leads us to.

And then lastly, I think Proverbs there are places in Proverbs where laziness leaves tasks undone. It neglects what is necessary.

Proverbs 26:15, “The sluggard,” another great picture right, “The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, but it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth.” It’s a picture of the kid, you know at the table, with his face in the bowl. That’s the picture that is painted here. He can’t do the most fundamental, simplest of tasks just remain undone.

Solomon also wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, and there in chapter 10 verse 18 he says, “Through sloth, through laziness, the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks.” Now what is he saying? There’s obviously things that need to be done, but ignoring them causes destruction. So we leave tasks undone.

Yesterday we were at a park in town with some of our neighbors, and our kids were playing on the playground and there was another dad that was there at the playground. If you happen to be here, I promise I’m not making fun of you at all. But it occurred to me in the midst of seeing this guys shirt, that it gets to the core of some of this idea of undone tasks.



This guy had a shirt on that said on the back, finisher. I think, I didn't see the front, but I think that he had completed a Spartan Race, but there's a lot of times in races, marathons and other things, that people who participate and finish they get a shirt that says that they finished. And we were laughing, not about the fact that he finished, but about the reality of our own lives, and having conversations, saying we need a shirt that says started. Not finisher, started, or participated. And we were laughing at the humor of the craziness of life, but it occurred to me in that moment that that's exactly what is at the heart of laziness.

The lazy man in the scripture will never get a shirt that says finisher for the right things that matter. He might finish something, but he's finishing it for personal satisfaction and not for things that matter.

Ultimately, laziness promises delight but it leads to devastation and death. Why? Because it's misplaced affection. It's turned in on itself. Instead of pointing toward the one who made us in worship, the lazy man seeks his own pleasure. He rejects God's good design for him and for life, and in doing so he listens to sins lie that he is the king of his kingdom, and that all the things that were made were made to delight and to serve him. He shifts all of life to strive toward one goal. He works hard toward a goal of his good and his pleasure, and he's lulled to sleep by those lies.

It's why Solomon says in Proverbs 19:15, "That slothfulness casts into a deep sleep." It causes our eyes to be closed to the reality of our own plight, and the reality that we've turned inward and we've focused on ourselves. And that's why even our thoughts become skewed. When we think that way, ultimately it leads to what Proverbs 26 says, "A sluggard is wiser in his own eyes, than 7 men who can answer sensibly."

He believes he's right because he's made all of life about his own personal comfort. And sin has sabotaged the idea of work. It's made us misplace our worship, and it's caused our work to be meaningless or to be cumbersome.

So where does that leave us? Well, there's really good news. Jesus redeems our work. There's hope for those of us who look at the scriptures and say, "I'm a lazy man. I'm a lazy woman. My heart does not look toward the things of God. It is not been in worship." There's hope for us because Jesus redeems our work, and how does he do it? He does it by his finished work.

The path to overcome laziness of our hearts is for us to rest in the finished work of Christ. And then, to work, to live in light of it. The gospel of Jesus restores our hearts so that our work is redeemed. This means for us, that we can find satisfaction in a job that may not be our hearts desire, because we understand that nothing committed to God is wasted. Nothing committed to God, with the heart of worship, is wasted. And no matter how mundane the thing is that's set before you, you can have delight in it because God has placed you in it, and called you to it. And it delights him when you work as you were made to work. And we were made for good things.

Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10, “We are God’s workmanship. We’re the product of God’s work, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

You have purpose. And that purpose is fundamentally, primarily, to worship the one that made you in all that you do in life. And when work becomes that, it gives you the joy of doing the task before you.

So as we, kind of, land here this morning let me leave you with two thoughts of takeaways, or applications. First of all, let’s make God’s glory the main motive of our work, and in doing so resist laziness. Work is not primarily about activity, it’s about worship. And laziness is not primarily about inactivity, it’s about misplaced worship.

So let’s make God’s glory, worship of the one who made us, the primary driving factor in why we do what we do. Not retirement. Not financial freedom, or even work itself. All of those things are fine, and they’re good, and they’re part of God’s grace. But what God is calling us to, is to do the thing for a bigger eternal reason.

When we do this, it frees us to find work satisfying. Not because of what we do, but because of who we work for. That’s why work can be a delight. Not because of what we do, but ultimately who we work for. The main meaning, or purpose, of our lives cannot come primarily from our jobs. It has to come from the delight of the one who made us, and part of the reflection of that is that we do what he’s made us to do in light of how he’s made us.

It’s why Paul would say in Colossians 3 verse 17, “That whatever you do,” that’s a wide open door. No one is left out of what Paul says here, “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

You have purpose in what you do. No season of life, no experience that you face, is wasted with God. He uses it and it can be a sense of satisfaction to you, even in the hard things, when your heart’s pointing toward him in worship.

And then secondly, let’s trust God with the results of our work. Both the outcome, the product of our work, and the reward of our work. We can trust God with both.

1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, be immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” Whatever it is this week that you put your hands or your mind to, know that it is not in vain because God has called you to it. And when you do it with your heart turned toward him and toward his glory, God is responsible for the product and the reward. And he is good. And he uses it for good, and it is a delight to him when we do the things that we do in honor of him.

So our work can be redeemed because of the shed blood of Jesus. And it's fitting that this morning we would conclude our time with the very act, among the things that we're called to as a church, to highlight the work of Christ in the Lord's Supper. So if you happen to be the men who are helping to serve us this morning, you can make your way to the back. And as we turn our hearts now toward contemplating the finished work of Christ that redeems us and our work, let me just give you a little bit of instruction.

If you're a believer, and you've confessed that Lord Jesus is your savior, then as the elements come we invite you to take the elements with us. If you're here this morning, and you've never confessed your sin, and you've never received the free gift of grace that Jesus offers through the work that he accomplished on the cross that we sang about, and that we see in scripture, then we simply ask that you would let the cup and the bread pass by. And you would let those who are confessing faith in Jesus take of those elements.

So as we go now into this time, may we rest in the finished work of Christ, and may we let his work redeem ours. Let's pray.

Father, thank you so much that you made us to work. It's a part of our design, and that though sin is marred creation sin is made work hard, it is not lost, because of you. In your kindness you redeem it, through your work. And you call us to rest in you. You call us to rest in your finished work, and even now you call us to turn our attention toward that very work. The work that purchased our salvation. The shed blood of Jesus. So as we enter this time, may we reflect on your kindness to us, and nothing is wasted with you. And you've purchased our redemption, through the work that you accomplished on the cross. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.



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