

Why work?

A sermon starter for Labor Day

Ecclesiastes 2

Use these thoughts and your text study to prepare a simple-living sermon that you might preach on or around Labor Day.

For workers and bosses alike, today's the day when the intrinsic benefits of work are extolled. God's people in the church think differently about this matter than most of the characters in THE RACE: A Simplicity Musical, whose mindless rushing through "work" leaves them incapable of perhaps-more-important "lifework." The church also takes a slightly different tack on the subject than does the writer of Ecclesiastes, that dour fellow! In contemporary versions of Solomon's wisdom, we understand that God's work—or God's mission—is engaged meaningfully by God's people when they understand that their vocations (or callings) contribute to God's will in many ways. They're getting God's work done, whatever they do and wherever they do it, paid or unpaid.

Ask your hearers to think of God's viewpoint, with God wanting to get things done—creating and sustaining the world, keeping evil in its place, redeeming people from death and its ugly relatives, making good and holy what otherwise would have gone bad. God thinks, "I'll get my will accomplished through my people who live and work in the world." God's people think: "The part of God's good and gracious will that I help make possible is" Both God and God's people rejoice in their shared work.

Children's sermon idea

Using an oscillating fan and some feathers or leaves, engage children in some "wind-chasing." Make sure they see that the effort is nearly useless. Then engage them in this series of questions, until children run out of logical-sequential answers:

- Why do people work? (*To get money*)
- Why do they need money? (*To buy things*)
- Why do they need to buy things? (*Answers will vary, among them some variations on "To be happy."*)
- What's "be happy" mean? (*Answers will vary, probably ending the stream of logic*)
Suggest that "being happy" may be like wind-chasing, and a kind of ultimate futility. Tell children that another answer to your first question might be, "To do what God

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wants to get done.” Give some child-friendly examples, and finish the children’s sermon by commending children for the work they do—in their families, with friends, at school—to fulfill God’s will for the world.