

Every Good Endeavor

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Genesis 2.8-20
January 12 & 13, 2013

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I. Connecting With One Another

Are there jobs or tasks you have performed that have felt like sheer joy? Do you know anyone who expresses sheer joy in their work? Conversely, have you ever felt your work was of little or no real significance or meaning, or was simply dreadful?

II. Introduction to this Study

The profound assertion found in Genesis 1 is that God created all that is, out of nothing, and did so because God's nature is to create. The Biblical account suggests that God works for the sheer joy of working. Unlike other ancient worldviews, the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) reveals a creating God who creates human beings with many of the same capacities God has (i.e. in the image of God). The inescapable conclusion is that God created people in such a way that work is to be an important activity, that our endeavors will serve a larger good, and that is to be a source of joy.

As we continue through this study on human endeavor we will see how God has invited us into a special role in the continuing work of creation. We have been given an invitation to cultivation – not just the Garden of Eden but to have a role in the cultivation of all creation.

III. Study the Text

- a. Before looking at Genesis 2.8-20, review the preceding chapter, especially verses 1.26 – 2.2. What do these verses imply about the uniqueness of human beings and about the significance of work?
- b. Read Genesis 2.8-20. What, according to verses 8 and 9, did God provide for human beings? The two trees mentioned – Tree of life and tree of the knowledge of good and evil refer to spiritual realities – there is a source of spiritual life and there is a test of obedience as we will see later. The picture of Eden is one of a place where there is harmony between God and all creation including human beings. As you picture Eden and the provision God has made for human beings in it, what do you imagine the people doing all day?
- c. Look at 2.15. What responsibilities are given to Adam (and to human beings as a whole)? Why does the garden need to be worked and taken care of? How does this gift of work give human beings dignity? What does this suggest about the value and blessing of work?



- d. In Genesis 2.19 and 20 Adam is given not only a responsibility but a privilege. Do you agree that these verses suggest God is inviting the human race into a role of co-creators or agents of God's continuing work of creation? Why or why not? How does human work continue to bring about new things in this world?
- e. One definition of "culture" (which comes from the same root meaning of "cultivate") is *the bringing about of something new into the world*. With this definition in mind, how does human enterprise or endeavor create culture? What does this say about the importance of human work?
- f. Look at Romans 8.19-25. How does the Apostle Paul describe the current state of creation? What is the future of all creation? If the creation is to one day be redeemed and set free from the bondage to decay, and if the effects of the work we do are imprinted in or have shaped this creation, what, then, is the value of our work? Is any work insignificant if all work brings something new into the world?
- g. Turn to Revelation 22.1-5 to see, a picture of a fully redeemed world and all things reconciled to God. There are two references to work – verses 3 and 5 – serving God and reigning forever (on-going work). Do you think this will be work for the sheer joy of it? How does this shape your appreciation of the call to work?
- h. Finally, can you think of ways in which work - whether for pay or not, whether part of a trade or profession or the work we do in our homes, whether work that produces a tangible object or work that influences or helps others, or even washing a kitchen floor – can be a spiritual discipline, a means of forming Christ-likeness in you?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Reflect on the ways your work (not just employment but all your endeavors) "bring about something new into the world." How does this impact your sense of worth and the value of your endeavors?
- b. Take a look at Exodus 35.10 - 36.1. Have you experienced the help of the Holy Spirit in your work and your endeavors? Would you pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that all your endeavors would be empowered and guided by God?
- c. How can your work be a means of spiritual formation? Would you ask God to shape your inner person through your work?

V. Pray

Spend some time in prayer:

- a. For the ministries of Good Shepherd to be fruitful endeavors that bring about new life in Christ and other blessings for many.
- b. For the outreach of the Open Table as hospitality and the love of Christ are extended to our community.
- c. For our Junior and Junior High aged students who were at Forest Home last weekend to continue to live into the commitments they made, to connect with God, and to grow in their faith.

