

The Beginning of Work

In the opening lines of the Bible we see God as creator. Through his power he is powerfully and creatively at work. At the pinnacle of God's creative endeavor lays the creation of mankind. It is the pinnacle because we alone are made in God's image. Because He made us in his image we have a dignity, a value and a capacity to be like God but also a responsibility; a responsibility to care for and enjoy the creation that he has given us to care of. This is the work that we are made to do. The value of our work has nothing to do with whether or not we are paid to do it. As we will see God values work very differently then we do.

In the perfect world of the Garden of Eden there is still work to do. Remember there is no sin; everything is going perfectly to God's plan and yet there is still work to be done. Gen 2:5b tells us that there is "**no man to work the garden**". In this perfect work setting there are a couple of relationships that are highlighted. The first is that there is a relationship between God and the man. The first time Moses, the author of Genesis uses the covenant name "Yahweh" (the LORD) here. The relationship between man and God are highlighted here. God has no such relationship with the animals. No use of the covenant name when he made the dolphins. In addition, God spoke everything else into being, but for making mankind he formed him, hand made if you will, and then breathed life into him. There is a relationship between Adam (the man) and Adamah (the ground) that is to be worked. God's plan seems to be incomplete without humankind. Man is made for a reason; to work the garden.

The first thing that God has Adam do is not to pray, not to play, not to make Eve and get the happy process of procreation going; but to work. Also the setting, the Garden of Eden, is made for work. In the center of the garden is the **tree of life**. Don't look it as a fountain of youth where you eat it once and live forever, but the tree of perpetuity. As long as you keep eating it, it will make you be young and strong. It is placed there for a reason. Work is hard and we need to be refreshed. So in the perfect workplace, God places this tree of life so that Adam may be alert and alive for his work. Still today, mankind has a longing the tree of life when we work. Hence the popularity of Tim Horton's coffee. We need a tree of life.

Another thing we can note in the first workplace, the Garden of Eden, was that Adam was given a very specific track of land to work and take care of in Genesis 2:10-14 by the Tigris and Euphrates river. **His work place is defined.** He isn't given the whole world to take care of. For some of you I know this is difficult to accept. We cannot do it all. God doesn't want you to do it all. He has given you a specific area to work in.

As we move along in the narrative we note that Adam is given the job to **work and care** for the garden in verse 15. The first worker is not pastor or priest but a farmer. It's what his creation needed. Also note that Adam worked directly for God. The word "**work**" here is not an agricultural term. It is primarily used of human service towards God. In the perfect workplace we are given work that God himself has given him to do. Look at the awesome power God gives to Adam. He gets him to name the animals, which means that he is responsible for him. God is seen here as being in service to Adam in Genesis 2:19, bringing the animals to him.

But in chapter 3 we see sin enter into the world. Now work is hard. Since sin entered into the world work now will be hard. The very ground is cursed. Think of curse in terms of God's blessing being taken away. In Genesis 3:22-24 we see Adam and Eve banished from the perfect work place. No more Tree of Life. No more tree that is even better than Tim Horton's at giving life.

The questions we need to ask ourselves are this. Is the curse permanent? Will work forever be hard and difficult? Is it impossible to still "work for God". Ephesians 5:6-7 in The Message reads

work heartily, as Christ's servants doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you're really serving God.

Here we see that it is still possible to work for God. It is possible to have joy at work, working with a smile on our faces. As Christ's servants we can still work for God. But if we are truly working for God and not ourselves we need to work God's way. Working God's way means we keep the Sabbath holy and do no work on that day. God worked six days and rested one day. The world can do without us working one day. Working for God means that we work with all the integrity, creativity and passion that we have. After all that is the way God himself worked.