

Intro Cole Simpson, Lead team. **Matthew 6.**

Work Recap

We are on week 3 of a 6 week series on work.

“Work is a means of glorifying God by joining him in taking the world somewhere.”

In week 1 we intro'd the idea that we need to place our work into a new story, namely the story of God. And we said the two false stories we put our work into are that some of us work to live. Make enough to pay the bills, don't really care about my job, favorite day is Friday because the work week is over, least favorite day is Monday because you have the whole week ahead of you. Just want to do enough so I can get what I need to done.

And that others of us live to work. Work becomes your life, your identity. 60 hour weeks are not that big of a deal. You are good at your job, it is what you talk about, it is what you think about it, you love your job. I'm gonna talk to the live to work crowd today, next week we'll talk to the work to live crowd.

What is water story.

We live in a culture that is training us to make work god, crying out to us live to work.

There is an article in the atlantic from a few years ago, where the writer Derek Thompson, is talking about an idea that he calls workism. Basically work is America's new religion, where our meaning and identity come

The decline of traditional faith in America has coincided with an explosion of new atheisms. Some people worship beauty, some worship political identities, and others worship their children. But everybody worships something. And workism is among the most potent of the new religions competing for congregants. What is workism? It is the belief that work is not only necessary to economic production, but also the centerpiece of one's identity and life's purpose..."

- Derek Thompson

The ethos of our society says work is worthy of all of our sacrifice, our attention, our hearts, our minds, our time, our money, our energy. Our society says be fulfilled in work and you will be fulfilled in life. Your job is your life.

Work has become the uncontroversial religion that all Americans can get behind. Again, I just want you to see this is the water we're swimming in. Everything around us since way early on in our lives has been shaping us towards achievement and getting ahead and putting our work first.

Let me show you how you we this.

Matthew 6:24-34.

This is an excerpt from the Sermon on the mount. One of Jesus most famous sermons. For the first chapter and half Jesus is trying to explain to his disciples, explain to the crowd, explain to us what life looks like in the Kingdom of God. And he says something that should grab your attention

Matthew 6:24-34

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

The word Jesus uses for money in this passage is the greek word mammon. Means more than just money - riches, prosperity, success, etc You can't serve, you can't have allegiance to, you can't worship both God and "success".

Our hearts always want to take good gifts from God, and make them a replacement for god.

This isn't new, we have been doing this since the beginning of time, in the garden. And this matters: **Because our master shapes our identity. And our identity dictates our actions.**

I have a Dog, his name is Jasper, he is a husky, he is beautiful and he is my baby boy. I love Jasper, and Jasper loves me, in fact I am Jasper's second favorite person in the world. Right after my wife Bethany.

And Jasper 90-95% of the time will listen to me, he wants me to be happy, he cares about what I think. But when Jasper has to choose between my wife and I, I lose every time.

That is what Jesus is saying here, who at the end of the day is your master. Something, someone is going to be on the throne of your heart, what is it? What is your priority?

Here is how this shows up in our lives:

Here's some indicators that work has become your God:

- **Work decides your mood.** Your rise and fall with your job. Work is going awesome, I am on top of the world. Work is terrible. I am not doing very well. You can't sleep because you are laying in bed stressed about your job, you snap at your kids and other people around you because work is stressful right now. **If you hate our job, your mood is constantly negative because of it. If you love your job, it's what fuels you.** Work is the primary source of both your happiness and your stress. Now there is a balance, work can be hard, and when you had an awful meeting with your boss it makes sense for that to affect your mood, but can you never get out of it? Can you put work down when you get home?
- **Work causes you to do things that you would say are wrong.** Gossip is wrong but everyone does it at work. I shouldn't get drunk but my co workers have a happy hour and I don't want to be weird. If I lie to this client then I will be able to close the deal.
- **You can't put work down.** One of my community group guys called me out on this a few weeks ago. I am in real estate so it is really easy for me to justify having my phone all the time so I can answer a text quickly etc. And one of my guys just said it seems like you care more about your clients then whats going on in our hearts. Ouch. That one hurt. I try and leave my phone in the car are on the table during group now. It might cost me a sale, but work isn't my priority. Is work negatively affecting your relationships? Does your family/friends feel like you care more about work than them? That is a problem.

- **Work is your primary decision maker.** The question is always what is best for my career, never what is best for my soul, my family, my church.
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- **You're ashamed to tell anyone what you do for a living.** You feel a sense of guilt or inadequacy because you haven't gotten that promotion yet, or you're not doing the type of work you thought you'd be doing.

This gets all of us. All of us are faced with the struggle of making work our god

Even if you're someone who says I hate my job, that might still be an indicator that work is your god, it's just that your work god has been failing you and not delivering on its promises.

I'll say it another way:

It's entirely possible that the reason why you hate your particular job is because your dream job is your god.

It is an interesting pattern that I have noticed this pattern as friends of mine have gotten jobs. They graduate and get jobs and a lot of them hate the job. So they quit and get a new one and then they hate that one, rinse and repeat. **The problem isn't the job, its your heart.**

You've been looking for work to bring you joy that only comes from God.

You've been looking for work to bring you meaning that only comes from God.

You've been looking for work to bring you peace that only comes from God.

Why do we do this:

When work becomes god, we look to it to provide what God has promised to provide.

But Why? Why do we look to work, look to success to justify ourselves. I think there are lots of reasons why: feels good, it is what we have been taught but, **Ultimately, we worship our work because we are anxious and it provides security and identity, and our worship of work creates in us anxiety..** Jesus talks about this on the sermon on the mount:

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Jesus connects our work to our anxiety. Because he knows we are going to look to work to provide what only God can provide. In our anxiety, in our fear, we look to our job to solve our problems. Once I get a

raise then I will be set, once I get my dream job then I will be satisfied, once I am the best I will be able to take my foot off the gas. We ask work to fill a hole that only God can fill.

This is how this looks in my life. I feel an extraordinary amount of pressure to provide for my family. It is a regular thing I have to surrender because it can absolutely dominate my thoughts and actions. And I think there is even a good healthy Biblical masculinity to that, to want to make sure my wife, and hopefully one day kids will be taken care of if something happens to me. But I obsess over it, I look to work to solve this problem, this void, this brokenness in me and around me that needs to be fixed.

And the funny thing is my diagnosis is actually correct, I am not enough, I need security, I need an identity. But because I am going to the wrong thing for the answer, it actually produces more anxiety.

Because I look to my job to provide my security, I think well I must have to do more because this obviously isn't providing the security I am after.

Because I look to my job to provide my identity, I think well I must have the wrong job because this, this isn't cutting it.

And Jesus comes alongside us and says, I am the answer to the question you are asking. I am the solution. I am the one that is meant to provide security, I have been doing it since the beginning of time. I am the one that is meant to provide identity, not a job that will not remember you in 100 years. Jesus literally says Don't be anxious, I know what you need. Stop seeking after it yourself. Stop thinking work is going to give it to you. Quit it. I've got you. **You don't have to worship your work.** Stop living under the lies that work will satisfy your soul.

Because, **when we believe work to be ultimate, it shapes our identity, and dictates our actions and causes a whole world of problems.**

When we throw all of our identity eggs into the basket of work or role or title or job. When we base who we are on our work, it negatively affects us and grows our spirit of anxiety.

When work is ultimate, we'll do anything to serve it and keep it.

When we worship work as god it slowly corrupts into people God did not design us to be.

Jesus is offering freedom in these verses. Freedom from the anxiety of providing, God has already provided. Freedom from being stressed about what is in front of you at work, you just get to be faithful. Don't take the good gift of work, which is a good gift, and turn it into a god. Can't we see that life is so much more than work?

It's all in God's hands. The one who created you and formed you and knows you and calls you.

We have to ask ourselves the question - why am I of so little faith? Why do I doubt what God has said about me? Why do I doubt the identity that He has given me? **Why do I work and strive and labor until I'm blue in the face trying to prove something or earn something?** Why do I doubt His provision in my life?

But by God's grace as we open up God's Word, get around community, come to a gathering to sing and to hear God's Word preached and proclaimed, as we seek God in prayer - by the power of the Holy Spirit we're reminded **"God gives us everything we look to our work to provide.**

And then work gets put into its proper place:

- **As gift, not god.**
- **As good, not ultimate.**
- **As a way to partner with God, not a means to be God.**
- **As a way to join God in building His kingdom, not a way to build your own kingdom.**
- **As a way to lift up and glorify the name of Jesus, not a way to make a name for yourself.**

When your identity and who you are is secure in Christ, you are freed up to put work in its proper place in your life, and to work hard, work well, to be a good parent, or coworker or boss, knowing that **ultimately our work is about Jesus and glorifying Him and worshipping Him, and receiving from Him.**

Application/Take Home

At the end of Derek Thompson's article on Workism there is a dynamite line near the end: "**Our desks were never meant to be our altars.**"

I love that. You and I were never meant to worship work at the altar of our desks. Work was never meant to hold the weight of our identity, or our feelings, or our emotions, or our time or our meaning or our purpose. We were designed and created and formed and shaped to worship God. The only one truly worthy of our worship.

So what does this mean for us tomorrow?

Entrepreneurship. About two years ago I knew I was moving to Charlotte with this church plant, we knew or we did not expect for Citizens to ever be able to pay me full time. So I talked to people and prayed about what I should do. I had worked in a full time vocational ministry for about 5 years, I really enjoyed it, had been affirmed in it, I would probably say I felt some form of calling towards it, still do. But also felt like through prayer and conversation that Bethany and I were supposed to go to Charlotte.

After a lot of conversations, I bought a Pelicans snoballs, my lifelong dream. Haha not really but honestly the reason I did it was because a lot of people said I was very entrepreneurial, and I didn't really know what that meant so I thought I would buy a business and find out.

And honestly I loved it. Pelicans was fine, but owning a business, getting to create and build that was really fun for me I really enjoyed it. So I started reading a lot about business because I felt like owning a business was what I wanted to do, at least in some capacity, but maybe owning a shaved ice business was not the long term plan. And eventually fell into real estate which again was a lot of fun. Getting to build out systems, help people invest. All of it a lot of fun. And in the process God has been pushing into my identity that I find in my 9 to 5, how I think about work,

1. **Know you will be tempted.** It has been interesting jumping from the church non profit world to the complete business world because I think it has shown me no matter what your job there are always going to be ways that Sin tries to make your job your God. When I was in ministry the

temptation was it is okay if I work too much if I put my identity in my job because I am doing it for God. In other words, me caring about my job, me putting my ministry before my friends, family and health was me putting God before those things. Which was a lie, I was just using ministry as a means to define myself. I wanted to be impressive and it was easy to hide behind doing work for God. In business the temptation is totally different, the temptation is work hard, make a lot of money so that you can take care of your family and give a lot away. Both good things, both things I care about and want to do. But again a lie, the lies are different but the why is the same, wanting to be someone who is important.

2. **You need a sabbath.** We preached on sabbath during our rhythms and formations series. You need a day of rest. The reason God created Sabbath was to remind us that he was sovereign over us. That he would always provide. Put an intentional sabbath in your week, depending on your schedule different days may work better, but take a day, put work down and intentionally spend time with God and community.
3. **Seek first the Kingdom of God.**

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

We were created to seek first the kingdom of God. **Your priority as a Christian is not your job, it's about God and His kingdom.** Kingdom first.

In your work, Christ becomes priority. God's kingdom becomes priority. Everything you do is for the glory of God, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31 whether you eat or drink do it to the glory of God.

And this should give you a new lens by which to see your job. It should on one hand push you to do your best in all things because your job is for God's glory and it should completely free you from having to find any identity in it. Because your identity is Christ.

When you seek first God's kingdom you begin to realize you are not first and foremost your job, you're first and foremost a follower of Jesus.

James tells us our lives are a vapor. If you live to work you are missing out on why God has you here for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. You are a child of God, you are in a unique space with unique opportunities, to tell people and invite people into the Kingdom of God. Don't miss that opportunity for the false sense of actualization a job gives you, you are much more than your job, you are a child of God, the light of the world, go and make disciples.

4. **Your identity is secure.** You have been purchased with the blood of Christ if you are a follower of Jesus. In other words, you don't need an identity from your job, it has already been given to you in Christ. Let me say it differently to minimize your value to what your occupation is, is actually a pretty significant demotion for you. You are a child of the God of the universe, you have been fearfully and wonderfully made, you are loved unconditionally, and you have been asked to partner with God in the expansion of his Kingdom. Your job is a part of you, maybe even an important part of you, but to say it is your identity is lunacy.

God invites us into a better way. To remember that work is good and it's a gift, but it is not god and it is not ultimate.

Pray. Communion.