



GOOD JOB

YOUR WORK MATTERS

Most of our life happens outside of church, and for many of us that means it happens at work. Some have careers in the workforce, others have work to do at home with family or volunteering in retirement. Your work matters to God. Your job can be glorious if you glorify God in your job.

GOOD JOB • Isaiah 61:1–7 • Tim McConnell • February 16, 2020

The Kingdom of God is growing. I know you enjoyed hearing from Yemi Mobolade last week. When we work our work for God, for others, it makes room for a city to rise. Yemi took the pulpit because I and the staff were in Dallas the week before at our church's national gathering. We are part of a group of almost 400 churches and let me tell you, the Kingdom of God is growing through this movement. I was amazed how many of our downtown city churches are in capital campaigns to expand their facilities. Highland Park Church in Dallas, First Pres in Greenville, S.C., Christ Pres in Edina, Minn., Third Pres Richmond (Va.), and a half-dozen others. First Pres Boulder launched a campaign and even changed its name to Grace Commons Church in order to better reach that city for Christ. It feels like God is expanding our tents, but it isn't about buildings. When I say the Kingdom of God is growing, it isn't buildings. It's the ministries they support. The ministries are growing. The impact is growing. The mission they have to reach their cities for Christ, that's growing, and lives are changing.

One of the most encouraging stories was from a church in Cohoes, N.Y. A church that was around 90 people two years ago and is now around 120, that once saw zero baptisms and last year celebrated a dozen. The pastor and leaders there have been receptive to the Spirit of God changing things, altering things, updating things, doing new things to reach new people for Christ. Praise God for that. Also, there was a mechanical bull. Can you believe this is what your elder Bonnie Cherry did? Not only her, but our friend Katie Fowler who we sent up to Denver to plant a new church. Well, you know your pastor couldn't let them have the last word. The Kingdom of God is growing in our churches.

The Kingdom of God is where God is the King. It's just that simple, but it is just that challenging. The Kingdom of God is growing. There are, without a doubt, more believers in Jesus Christ on the face of the earth this year than last. The church is blossoming around the world. The Gospel is thriving in the Middle East. People are turning to Jesus in droves. The underground church in Iran is growing faster than any in the world. Africa, Asia, Latin America. We can take heart, the Kingdom of God is advancing. Because the Kingdom of God is where God is the King in the hearts of men and women. You see, the hardest soil to win for the Kingdom, it isn't the soil where a church is built, or where square footage expands, or a thousand more seats are built. The hardest soil to win is the soil of the heart. Win that, and the Kingdom grows.

Where you are at work, is God the King? We are coming to the end of this series, *Good Job: Your Work Matters*. You were made to work, but work can be frustrating. We can either think too much of it and rest our identity in it or

think too little of it and flee from it. In Christ, we are free to work. We don't have to justify ourselves through work, because He has already justified us. We don't have to give up at work, because we can work for Him whatever we do. So your job can be glorious if you glorify God in your job. Last week we saw that good work, industry, can raise a city. Today we want to be reminded that whatever we are doing, wherever we are working, we are representatives of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is where God is the King. When the soil of your heart belongs to the Kingdom, you will find yourself working for that Kingdom wherever you are.

There's something wrong in the world, and everyone can feel it. If you missed last week, Yemi showed us some commercials about finger-dipping (eating cheese dip with your hands); and chunky-style milk. Save some chunks for me! The commercials ended with "That's not right." The point is when something isn't right, we all know. We do. We can all tell when something is off. And something is off. But, with the coming of Christ, it is beginning to be healed and restored. What will that look like? Jesus called it the Kingdom of God. At the beginning of his ministry, in Luke 4, it tells us that Jesus came to the synagogue in Nazareth, stood up, took the scroll of Isaiah and turned to this passage in Isaiah 61. When he sat down, everyone turned to look to him. "He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'" (Luke 4:21). This is about the Kingdom of God. Jesus says it has begun.

"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1). It starts with the Spirit. The Spirit of God is involved. The Holy Spirit is at work. How much room do you make for the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you allow, or even entertain the idea, that the Holy Spirit is at work in your workplace? God is at work everywhere and the Spirit of God is on the move. "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor." "Anointed" is a big word. Messiah means anointed one. Christos, Christ, means anointed one. When Jesus read this, He was claiming what we call His Prophetic Office. I'll be talking about the three offices of Christ in some upcoming lectures. Jesus is Prophet, Priest and King. By reading this passage and claiming its fulfillment, Jesus was saying that He was anointed a prophet, anointed to proclaim, by the Spirit of God himself.

Anointed to proclaim what? A vision of life follows. A vision of the Kingdom of God. It looks like this: "good news to the poor." That's other-worldly. You don't get that a lot

in this world. Christ-followers must always be invested in good news to the poor. What else? The brokenhearted are bound up for healing. There is hope. Nothing is beyond the healing touch of Jesus. He is anointed to proclaim "freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." Prisoners who should go free, that is! Not a jailbreak! Wrongfully imprisoned are set free, released. Think of human trafficking, children held in slavery. The way of Christ is a way of freedom. And, you know, for those who are in prison because of mistakes they made, part of the Kingdom is also forgiveness. Pardon is available where God is the King. The Kingdom of God looks like this. What else?

"To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor" (Isaiah 61:2–3). "The year of the Lord's favor," that's the Jubilee Year, the year of freedom. "The day of vengeance," that's the day when things are set right. God's justice is satisfied. Right is rewarded; wrong punished. All is right. "To comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve." Loss isn't the end. Life is in God's hands. There is comfort and hope even in the face of death.

Then we trade in some things for some other things. How about this trade? "A crown of beauty instead of ashes." People in mourning would throw ashes on their head to show on the outside what they were feeling on the inside. It's okay to show on the outside what's going on inside. We're not very good at that sometimes. But here comes the Kingdom, when the ashes around your head become a crown of beauty. The oil of mourning becomes the oil of joy. The spirit of despair is exchanged for a garment of praise. Then, I love this: "They will be called oaks of righteousness." You know those moments when you feel totally broken down? You know those times when it feels like your life is being deconstructed? I was talking to an associate pastor last week who is suddenly in charge of a church due to the resignation of the senior pastor, and the church is not healthy. His eyes were the size of silver dollars, you know. Sometimes when the pressure is coming from all sides at once, I told him, God is strengthening your foundation. Hang in there. What you are experiencing now you will look back on as the moment you gained the strength to do what's next." That's what this passage is saying. The weak ones. The broken down and pushed into the soil, they will rise up. Oaks of Righteousness, "a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor."

The picture goes on. God's people will be rebuilders,

repairers, restorers, and renewers. They will know provision. There will be plenty. Their God is the Lord! They will know joy. They will see their work pay off for the Kingdom in eternal and beautiful ways. And, look at this now, they will be priests: "And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God" (Isaiah 61:6). Do you think this refers to some small cadre of spiritual professionals? No. You. You will be called priests. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). If you are in Christ, you are a priest. We call it the priesthood of all believers. What is a priest? A priest conveys the world to God and God, or the things of God, to the world. God to world; world to God. Who stands in the gap? You do. I do. There is a Kingdom coming, and in some ways already breaking out, a Kingdom the world cannot see. But you see it. You know it. Your heart belongs to it. Your songs were written there. Your poems bounce with its rhythms. Your loves, well the things you love belong to that Kingdom more than this one. When you see the world, you see what's wrong with it, and the measure you use is how far this world is away from this Kingdom of God. How do you work for it?

We have talked about coming to peace with work, about having peace in your position, joy in your job. Your job can be glorious when you glorify God in your job. It really is true; your job is not just a platform for evangelism. Good work, work done with excellence, has its own influence. But it is also true that you are a priest. You are an emissary. You represent the Kingdom of God. For all the good work you do, how are you advancing the Kingdom? To look back on 20 years or 30 years of work—88,000 hours of labor in a career—I hope you will be proud of doing good work for its own sake. But what if you could look back and know that you helped a few souls to Christ along the way? What if you were able to get into spiritual conversations, remove a few barriers, issue a few invitations, open a heart or two to the grace and love of Jesus Christ? I heard a story this week of one of our members. Some buddies at work came up to him and said, "Hey Ryan, you're a follower of The Jesus. We have a question..." Alright. Shoot! People know you know Jesus. People know you represent another Kingdom. You are priests. You are ambassadors. You are emissaries of the King sent to the places you work. Some conversations lead nowhere. Most, probably. But some lead to eternity.

Maybe I'm not being clear. I like all the Faith and Work philosophy that reminds us that work is a good thing, and that good work is sometimes the best witness to a good God, and that we can be at peace with our positions by working as unto the Lord and not to earthly masters, but there is something too to evangelism. We are where God has placed us to share the Gospel. People can't see what they

can't see, they can't know what they can't know unless you are willing to tell them. You are priests. The hardest soil to gain is the soil of the heart. Pay attention when the door is open and walk through it into conversations that matter about Jesus. I haven't helped you much with anything practical. Just know we hold it as a value in our First Pres Way to "Share Good News: Do all it takes to reach those who do not know Christ." We will keep pursuing you with training and ideas and helps, until we all feel a little more comfortable and confident when we are the follower of The Jesus people look to for answers. For many, you may be the only Gospel they ever read.

The soil of the heart is where the Kingdom expands. I'll never forget when I was pastor of a church in Atlanta. The High School Ministry was going off to camp, a new camp. I had insisted they get involved with a camp that pressed the question about a personal relationship with Jesus. One the guys who signed up made the team a little nervous. This was the kind of kid whose name made it to the staff meeting. "So and so is signed up for camp; can your team handle this?" Well, I was standing with the parents when the bus got back. Off came the kids. Off comes this young man, smiling. His mother beside me gasped, gripped my arm and almost fell over. She started to cry and whispered, "I haven't seen him smile like that for a year." It wasn't his clothes that were different. It wasn't his face that was different. It was his heart. He had given his heart to Christ. Once that soil was gained by Christ, once that soil is gained, the whole world changes.

How can such a Kingdom come? How can it be that the poor are brought good news, that the broken are healed? The ones who feel weak, pushed down into the ground, they rise up like oaks? How can that happen? What can cause that switch to be thrown, that reversal to come, that turn? The cross of Christ, that's what. Never forget, the Kingdom of God is the life made possible by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Of that message, we are messengers. Of that truth, we are ambassadors. Of that Kingdom, we are emissaries. By the Cross, the kingdom of this world is finished, and the new Kingdom is on the way. By the Cross. Because that Cross went down into that soil, the soil of our heart is won, and you and I, at work, at home, at play, we are for the Kingdom.

Dick Halverson: "You go nowhere by accident. Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are, God has put you there. God has a purpose in your being there. Christ lives in you and has something he wants to do through you where you are. Believe this and go in the grace and love and power of Jesus Christ." Amen.

STUDY GUIDE

GOOD JOB • "For the Kingdom"

Isaiah 61:1-7

UP: UP: Connect with God through Spending Time in His Word

Read aloud these two passages: Isaiah 61:1-7 and Luke 4:14-22.

Allow a few moments to silently reflect on what you heard. Underline or note any words or phrases that seem meaningful.

- 1) What appears to be the most significant Kingdom reality at play within these two texts?
- 2) In verse three of our Isaiah text we find that those who "grieve" are given a new identity: "They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor," (emphasis added). Consider how this stunningly beautiful promise relates to 1 Peter 2:9. Reflect on what it means for the rescued and redeemed people of God to be given a charge by God to "display His splendor" and "declare His praises."

OUT: Connect With the World Around Us (Join God in His Mission)

In discussing the main idea from our text this week, Pastor Tim writes, "Whatever our labors, we bear witness to the coming Kingdom. We have seen glimpses of God's perfect order inaugurated in Jesus Christ and growing under His authority and power. Our work is always for the Kingdom of God, to extend and participate in its ways. How can you use your skills and energies to promote the Kingdom of God?"

- 4) How can you use your skills and energies to promote the Kingdom of God (in your family, workplace, church, etc.)?
- 5) Spend time thanking God for how He equips His people to witness to the Kingdom of God (or to put it another way, to be "Light and Life for the City").
- 6) What other questions are brought to bear on your mind and heart that align with the theme this week?

IN: Connect with Each Other

Ask the Lord to connect you with at least one other person this week to continue to process this passage of Scripture together in Christian community. Ask the Lord for an intense desire for His Word to transform you even more into the likeness of Christ (this is best done with 1-3 close friends who are also seeking Christ). Thank God for the way He gives us one another as a great gift, helping us to apply God's Word to our lives. Pray that Colorado Springs experiences in a profound way the goodness of the Lord!