

Walter Johnston - 15 August 2021

(Sermon Summary)

What are you doing on earth?: the truth about mankind

Reading: Ephesians 4:17-32

An international student tried to ask, “What on earth are we doing” and instead asked “What are we doing on earth?” We all need to find an answer to this question. Scripture tells us that our purpose is found in God.

Mankind was created in the image of God. Before the Fall, people were God-centred, taking delight in God, serving Him and enjoying fellowship with Him. This was Heaven on earth. The four main aspects of our life, work, family, recreation and education, were all centred around God.

Sin changed everything and at the Fall, God was replaced by self on the throne. People put themselves first, becoming self-important and pleasing themselves rather than God. After the Fall, bliss became chaos as everyone pursued their own selfish ends and harmony was lost. The whole of human life, with its four aspects, was affected. This sermon looks specifically at work.

People were created to work on six days then rest on the Sabbath (the 6:1 pattern). The Lord Jesus sets us the example of how to observe the Sabbath. The seventh day is set aside to worship God and to do good to others. God works on the Sabbath as he sustains the universe; Jesus healed on the Sabbath, doing good to those in need.

Work after the Fall

After the Fall, everyone worked for themselves rather than for God. Some people got others to work for them, which degenerated into exploitation and slavery. We build things to glorify ourselves, the tower of Babel being the first example. People build empires, seeking to be their own gods.

Further consequences of the Fall are poor, shoddy work, and a disregard for the safety of employees. People ignore the Sabbath, working all hours. At the other extreme, some do not work at all, such as the children of the super-rich.

The Christian has repented of this way of living and is seeking to get back to the original model of work, with God at the centre. “Sometimes you have to go back to go forward”.

The Christian and work

Putting God at the centre may mean making restitution to those we have exploited or defrauded, as Zacchaeus did (Luke 19:1-10). It may take some time to achieve this, but we must sort out the past wherever we can.

As well as being God-centred, we must be other-person centred. The thief in Eph.4:28 is instructed to work, not only to provide for his own family, but also to give to those in need. Manual labour (v28) is noble if done for the honour of God; all types of work are equally valuable. Jesus worked for God during his years as a carpenter and would have been the best carpenter ever! Both managers and employees should start each day saying, "I am serving you, Lord".

Two specific areas of work

Student: a Christian student must get the right balance between their studies and Christian activities, not neglecting either and remembering the 6:1 pattern. This is a time when you can grow as a Christian.

Mother: Mothers deserve respect and can care for their children to the glory of God. This should be thought of as a top job!

In all things, we should have God at the centre. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).