

25 - All About Work and Prayer

by Ben Torrey

Ben Torrey explores the profound connection between work and prayer, emphasizing that both can serve as acts of worship and communication with God.

Duration: 8:10

Scripture: Genesis 2:15, Genesis 3:16-19, Exodus 20:8-11, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:24-25, John 1:1

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the motto of Jesus Abbey, which states that prayer is labor and labor is prayer. The speaker shares a remarkable story of how God provided for the abbey's construction through the power of prayer. He emphasizes that Jesus himself was a laborer and that labor is valued by God. The speaker also highlights the connection between labor and prayer, explaining that prayer is a form of communication with God and a way to share our hearts with Him.

Transcript

Good evening, this is Chang Soo Kim continuing to sit in for Ben Torrey who is still traveling in the U.S. Here are his thoughts for us this evening. All about work and prayer, he writes. Jesus Abbey's motto about work and prayer is quite famous.

Prayer is labor and labor is prayer. Many people understand how prayer can be hard work, especially serious intercession or prayer for God's guidance and provision. Over the past two weeks, I have been sharing about God's special provision for Jesus Abbey's Three Seas Center.

First, the land and then the permit to build. It is a remarkable story. It is also a testimony to the effectiveness of serious prayer.

God has provided for the life and work of Jesus Abbey for over 40 years in response to the prayer of the members. Today, however, I want to explore the other half of that motto. Labor is prayer.

This is puzzling to most people, especially to those who are raised in a culture that thinks physical labor is only for those not fortunate enough to get a good education, that labor is something for other people, something to be avoided at all costs. We at Jesus Abbey have a totally different perspective. We see a physical labor as something that is valued by God, something that can be a means of communication with Him as well as praise offered to Him.

We also have a deep sense of our Lord Jesus having been a laborer, a construction worker. Everyone knows that Jesus was a carpenter. What we don't often realize, though, is that a carpenter in the time and place that Jesus' earthly life was not someone who worked quietly in a carpentry shop making beautiful furniture.

While it is likely that he worked with a wood, it is also very likely that he worked with a stone as well. When Jesus was a child in Nazareth, Herod Antipas was rebuilding the nearby city of Sepphoris about an hour's walk as his capital of Galilee. It is most probable that Joseph and Jesus worked on some of the many new structures, houses, government buildings, the amphitheater, and other that were going up at the time.

All of this construction was in limestone and marble. I believe that by the time Jesus was 30, his physical stature had been shaped by this hard labor, that his muscles were hard, his hands calloused. As we think about labor or hard work, so we think of Jesus.

As in all things, He is our model, inspiration, and Lord. He himself said, But this is not the only reason that we think of labor as special or of value to God. Think back for a minute to the original work of creation.

I often ask people who the first laborer was. After thinking for a few minutes, someone usually says God, which is the correct answer. In fact, He worked so hard in creating the world that He rested after six days and hallowed the Sabbath, giving it as a sign of our special relationship to Him.

That is our relationship to Him as a laborer who is to take a day of rest every seven days. And then God's final act of creation was to create man in His image as a laborer. Having created man, God put him in a garden and told him to take care of the gardener, as well as care for the animals.

When God created man, He gave him work to do. It was only after sin entered the world that labor became something that is arduous as we learn in Genesis 3, 16 through 19. So then God the Creator was a laborer, as was God the Son in His human incarnation, and so too man when God first created him.

With this background then, we should truly value labor very highly, and so we do. But what has this to do with prayer itself? Let us think for a moment what prayer is. Above all, it is communication between one praying, us, and one receiving the prayer, God.

As communication, it is sharing our heart with God, listening to His heart for us, getting to know Him, and of course, worshiping and praising Him. Prayer is also intercession for others. We see labor as encompassing all of these.

Time spent working together invariably helps people get to know each other better. It is often the means for building deep relationships of trust and understanding. When we are at work with our hands farming, building, doing cleaning, or janitorial work, or other types of manual labor, we often have much time for reflecting, for thinking deeply.

Even as we work with others and become comrades, we can also have a sense of God laboring alongside of us. These times of labor can be for us very special times of intimacy with the Lord, of casual conversation, if you will. They can be, and for me, often are times of deepening our relationship with Him.

This is especially true if our work is outdoors, when we can enjoy God's handiwork in nature, the sun, weather, and so forth. We may not actually enjoy getting hot, or cold, or wet, but these physical experiences in the world that God has created can bring us into a deeper sense of His creative work.

Working on inside work that is repetitive, boring, and dull can also be times of mental prayer combined with our effort and so draw us closer to Him.

As we work, we can also praise God for having created in us the ability to work productively through the use of our body and our mind. In this way, any work, no matter how difficult it may be for us, especially if we are disabled in some way, can become an act of praise, a prayer of worship. As we are working for others, either for pay or as a volunteer, our work itself can become a prayer of intercession.

Our effort on behalf of another. It can also serve to focus our attention on the other person as well. This is particularly valuable if we are working for someone who is not a Christian.

Our labor for them becomes our intercession for their salvation. There are many ways that labor can become prayer, but there is one more that I would like to end with. That is the prayer of faith.

When we embark on any enterprise in obedience to God, it is an act of faith. This act of faith may also challenge the unbelieving world as we read in Hebrews 11 7 about Noah building the ark. By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen in reverence, prepared an ark for the salvation of his household by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

We also think of Nehemiah and the Jews building the walls of Jerusalem in the face of opposition. Read Nehemiah chapters 3 to 6. What a testimony to faith and to labor as a prayer of faith. It was real work, hard construction work, and it put the enemies of Nehemiah and the Jews to shame.

Labor as a prayer of faith. A most powerful prayer. These are just a few thoughts on labor as prayer.

There's much more that can be said on this topic, but we have run out of time. I trust this leaves you with some things to think over. Until next week, good night.

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