

Making a Living and Making a Life

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of making a life, building a character, and growing into Christian maturity, rather than just making a living.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:3, Ecclesiastes 3:12-13, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 25:40, Philippians 4:19, Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, James 1:12, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Living a Life of Purpose", "Righteousness in Work"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the distinction between making a living and making a life, urging that while earning a living is essential, it should not overshadow the importance of building character and seeking God's kingdom first. He highlights that our primary duty is to develop our capacities and grow into Christian maturity, serving Christ in all our endeavors, regardless of the circumstances. Miller warns against compromising righteousness for the sake of material needs, asserting that true success lies in living a life that pleases God and reflects Christlike qualities. Ultimately, he calls for a focus on spiritual growth and integrity over mere worldly achievements.

Transcript

Governor Russell, of Massachusetts, in addressing a graduating class, said, "There is one thing in this world better than making a living -- and that is making a life." The words are worthy of most careful pondering. It is the duty of everyone to make a living. "Six days shall you labor," runs the old commandment. "If any will not work -- neither let him eat," was Paul's frank counsel regarding idlers. We are taught in the Lord's Prayer to look to God for what we need for the sustenance of our bodies, but it is "our daily bread" that we are authorized to ask for -- and it is not ours until we have earned it. Excepting those who are too young, those who by the infirmities of old age are incapacitated for labor, and the sick the obligation to make a living rests upon all.

Yet making a living is not the first thing in life. The first thing is to make a life, to build a character, to grow into Christian maturity. Our Lord showed us the true relations of a living and a life, when he said, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The "all these things" to which he referred are things we need for our bodies -- what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and what we shall be clothed with. Jesus does not say these things are unimportant -- it is necessary that we have daily bread, as long as we stay on the earth. But his teaching is that we are not to put first in our thought, our desire, our request -- the supply of our physical needs. Indeed this is not to be

the real aim of our living at all. We are to make central in all our life, the righteousness and the kingdom of God. That is, we are to live . . .

to do God's will,

to be what he made us to be,

to do what he wants us to do,

to attain the divine beauty.

The supplying of the needs of our body is really not our matter at all, but God's. If we live truly, we will look after our living. "These things shall be added."

It is the duty, therefore, of each one, to make a life. That is what we are here for. This means that we shall develop to the fullest possibilities, the capacities which have been entrusted to us, making the very most of our life. It means that we shall seek in all our experiences to grow toward perfection. We are always at school. Our great Teacher is ever setting new lessons for us. In all our common and uncommon duties and experiences, there is something behind the mere act required. To do the simplest task negligently, slurring or skimping our work -- hurts our life and character.

While we are serving men -- we are also and primarily serving Christ. Our work may not be congenial, and in our distaste for it we may do it negligently, but if we do we shall fail to please Christ and to seek him aright. We may be under a master who is unworthy, who treats us unjustly, and we may be tempted to think that we are not required to do our best for him. But there is Another who is our real Master, and it is for him that we must work. "The King will answer and say to them: Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." Matthew 25:40

In all our efforts to make a living, whatever the pressure of need may be, we should never cease to seek God's righteousness. That is, we should never, in order to get our daily bread -- do anything that is not right. Sometimes people say as an excuse for doing something dishonest or dishonorable, "I must live." That is not true. The essential thing is not that we shall live -- but that we shall do the will of God. We would better die of hunger, than do wrong to get bread. It is said that God feeds the sparrows, and yet these birds are most careful in gathering food from the ground, to keep their wings clean and unsoiled.

It is not enough to get on in life -- we must get on in a way that will please God, in a righteous way. When we see a man rising to prominence, growing rich, achieving power and fame -- before we can commend him as worthily successful, we must know by what steps he has climbed to his high eminence. Many are those who in making a living, or in winning worldly success -- wreck and lose their life!

Our first aim should ever be to build a life that will appear spotless and beautiful before God. No other success is worth achieving. A man may make a splendid living, robing himself in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day -- but if meanwhile he is not making within himself a noble and Christlike manhood, he is losing all that is worth while.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net