



A quote attributed to Martin Luther.

The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays—not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship.

That's a great quote, isn't it? It brings a different dimension to our daily work. The only problem is that Luther never said this.¹ But it gets one thinking. Does God love clean floors? Is God interested in good craftsmanship? Well, to say the opposite doesn't make any sense, does it? God is interested in shoddy craftsmanship. The question should not be *is* God interested in something like good craftsmanship but rather *why* would God be interested in good craftsmanship?

This quote certainly agrees with Colossians 3:17. *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* We can sweep kitchens, make shoes and do everything else for God's glory, but I want us all to understand why such things bring glory to God. If you do, you will be much more likely to seek to do them for his glory. This quote also refers to our work lives, which is the subject of this morning's message on stewardship.

First let me remind you of our definition of stewardship and a guiding principle from last week. Stewardship is "maximizing God's blessings for his glory and our benefit."

- Stewardship is a more gentle way of stating the dominion principle from Genesis 1:26-28. He created the earth for the purpose of handing it over to us. It's a radical concept but absolutely true.
- Stewardship and dominion are absolutely dependent upon a continual acknowledgment and awareness that God owns everything. You immediately invalidate all stewardship efforts if you forget this foundation.
- Whatever bring glory to God is always good for us. We usually talk about God's glory as if it is something that inevitably will cause us harm. It's possible that obeying God will

harm us in some way. We are reminded quite clearly in 2 Timothy 3:12: *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* We will deal with this more thoroughly when we talk about stewardship and suffering. This principle is not a prosperity gospel kind of a truth. Obedience to God will be painful at times, but it's always good for us. That's what we have to remember. And even when there is sacrifice and pain, joy and satisfaction join them as brothers and sisters.

Now to our first principle on work.

1. We were created to work.

All teaching on this topic begins in Genesis chapter two. We've already seen the dominion mandate, the first command in all of Scripture, but in chapter two we have the very first activity of mankind-work.

When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— 7 then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Verse six presented the problem—"there was no man to work the ground." I call it a problem but it was more of a need. God created but there was no man to care for his creation. There was a need for a worker and a caretaker. So immediately after stating the need, God created man from the dust of the ground. And as soon as he was created, man set about to work. It's the very first thing! God planted a garden and there he put the man. God planted and God put. The man went from his first breath to his first moment at work. You can't get much more foundational than that, can you?

This is point is especially important because it happened before the Fall. Work is an essential mandate in the pre-Fall world. When you have a bad day at work it feels like the whole thing is one big sinful mess. And it certainly can be. Work involves all kinds of sin and you know why? Because all kinds of sinners show up every day. But if all the sinners stayed home no work would ever get done and you wouldn't get paid, would you!

But work also involves sin because a great deal of the work we all do is a form of battling the never ending effects of sin. The sin where Captain James Boisen works is more obvious than some workplaces. If you work in a maximum security prison, you know that sin abounds at your workplace. But others are less obvious. We need auto mechanics because the effects of sin cause things to rust and fall apart. We need doctors, nurses and pharmacists because the effects of sin make us sick.

So while sin is a part of everyone's work, that was not true from the beginning. Work was ordained from the moment of creation. Or like dominion and stewardship, you could say that we were created to work. It is fundamentally a wonderful thing and it is up to us to rediscover why that is true.

2. Work is a vital part of the dominion/stewardship mandate.

The next assignment that God gave to Adam was to name the animals. Naming things is itself a form of dominion but Adam was also at work.

Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.

When you assign a name to something you are asserting your dominion and rule over it. Do you know who Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were? You may not recognize their Hebrew names but you will certainly recognize their Babylonian names-Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were given these new names of Babylonian origin in order for their captors to assert their dominion over them.

Thanks to Brent Beck I learned of another amazing scientist who ascribed to the God given dominion mandate of all people. His name was Charles Townes. He was professor at Columbia University MIT and U.C. Berkeley. He was married to his wife Francis for 73 years. He pioneered the field of infrared astronomy and was a co-discoverer of black holes in the universe.² In 1964 he won the Nobel Prize in Physics for investing the laser.³ In 2005 he won the Templeton Prize⁴ which "honors a living person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works."⁵ Up until he was 98 years old he still went to work at Berkeley nearly every day. He died this past January at age 99 survived by his wife Francis. Townes was a brilliant scientist and here's how he anchored scientific discovery to Genesis.

[S]omehow, we humans were created somewhat in the likeness of God. We have free will. We have independence, we can do and create things, and that's amazing. And as we learn more and more - why, we become even more that way. The purpose of the universe, I think, is to see this develop and to allow humans the freedom to do the things that hopefully will work out well for them and for the rest of the world.⁶

Townes is describing our word "maximizing." He says, "And as we learn more and more - why, we become even more that way." In other words, the more we maximize God's blessings the more we reflect the image and likeness of God. Pretty cool stuff and I think he is exactly right.⁷

He does call himself a Christian. he rejected evolution and believed in intelligent design but he did not appear to have the kind of vibrant faith that George Washington Carver possessed.⁸

When the idea for the laser came to me, I was sitting on a park bench thinking, Now, why haven't I been able to do this? Suddenly a new idea comes to me, a new creation. Where did it come from? Did God give me this idea? Who knows? I didn't suddenly have a view of God's face, if that's what you mean. In science we just don't talk about it much. You say, Well, I had an idea. In the religious world people talk about revelations. They are not so basically different.⁹

Men like Townes and Carver exemplify Proverbs 22:29
Do you see a man skillful in his work?

He will stand before kings;
he will not stand before obscure men.

So these two men were made famous for their great scientific achievements. In essence, they did stand before kings. But what about the average Joe? What about the rest of living in virtual obscurity? Does our work matter or do we have to do something great and get our names in the newspaper?

This is one of the reasons I started the [Men at Work Project](#). The goal is to visit the workplace of every man in our church. I have two main objectives with this project. The first goal is to get to know each guy a little better. If I can see their work environment and better understand what it is that they do, when they have a down time, I will be able to encourage them more effectively.

But the second objective is to make sure each of these men know that their work matters. I want each of them to develop a powerful and ongoing conviction that their work is a fulfillment of the dominion mandate. They don't have to stand before kings to be highly "skillful in their work."

My conviction is that any job does fulfill the dominion mandate and therefore any job can fulfill the Biblical stewardship mandate. Remember, those are two different things. Anyone can exercise dominion. Charles Townes discovered and developed the laser to be used for the good of humanity but if it's possible to use it for evil, someone will.

If everyone can clearly grasp all of the possibilities within these stewardship principles, I am convinced we could literally revolutionize our work places. God will be glorified and we will benefit in a multitude of ways.

The Men at Work Project started off with a bang and then slowed down but I want to keep it going. A few did not work out due to my schedule and several are waiting for warmer weather. Two weeks ago Dennis Hutchison invited me out into the woods during his last week of work in Vernon County. As a forester, Dennis's dominion is directly related to God's creation. Dennis has a desire to manage more forest land which was the main reason for the change of jobs. In this sense, he wants to maximize his stewardship role. We could say that Dennis is a steward of the trees.

Doug Aloisi in many ways has a very similar job at the Genoa Fish Hatchery. Doug manages God's creation in Mississippi River. It's as if Doug lifted his job description directly from genesis 1:26- *And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea.* You could hardly get a better fit than that. The Proverbs 22:29 verse also comes into play since Doug is often interviewed for one thing or another. I think we've all seen Dog's smiling face on the evening news at least once. Not that he is seeking notoriety but it comes with the job. So if Dennis is a steward of the trees then that means that Doug is a steward of the seas. Since he also manages the hatchery, that also makes him a steward of the employees.

Do you see a rhyming pattern developing here? I thought I could have a little fun with this so I kept going. Last week I told you about Larry Puhl and how he managed the team that invented the cell phone. That makes him a steward of circuitries.

Pete Kondrup is the General Manager of the Westby Creamery Co-op so that makes him steward of the cheese. I'll say more about Pete in a little bit.

As pharmacists, Chris and Sheila are stewards of the sneeze and wheeze.

Tim Farrell has a hobby of collecting honey which makes him a steward of the bees.

As head of the Facilities Committee, John Goeke is the steward of the church keys. And the Facilities Committee used to be called the Board of Trustees

Ryan is studying Athletic Training and pre-Physical Therapy and will be dealing with athletic injuries throughout his career, which makes him a steward of the knees.

Mariana Mickelsen and Monica Hart are studying Dental Hygiene in order to become stewards of periodontal disease.

Finally, both of my boys are exemplary stewards of macaroni and cheese. Hey, that worked out pretty well, don't you think? We're having a little fun but I want to drive home the point about work and stewardship. I love to see what these guys do in their jobs, how they are maximizing God's blessings.

Getting back to Pete Knodrup. He has been the manager at the Creamery since 2004, a profession passed down from his own father. Here are some of the awards he has earned over the years.

1987-1st place Swiss cheese- WCMA US cheese contest
1990-1st place Swiss cheese- WCMA world cheese contest
2010-1st place Cottage cheese- WCMA world cheese contest
2012-1st place Sour Cream- World Dairy Expo
2012-1st place Cottage cheese-World Dairy Expo
2012-1st place French Onion dip- World Dairy Expo
2014-1st. place French Onion dip- World Dairy Expo.
2014-Grand Champion- French Onion dip- World Dairy Expo

Brent Beck is a veterinarian but many years ago the family started their own embryo business. Every year they ship hundreds of frozen embryos to 22 countries. This makes Brent a 'veterinpreneur.'

We've got small businesses run by our own folks. Andy Halverson and Christopher Baird run dairy farms. John and Virginia run a sheep farm and a variety of additional things. There's this guy named Dave who I think sells pizza, or something like that. The Voehl family runs two businesses-an organic egg farm and a gutter business. John Mickelsen provides financial services through Thrivent. The Theises own a hardware store. The Roth family are taking over at Thorson Funeral Home.

We also have many talented tradesmen. Carpenters like Larry Hass, welders like Carl Hamilton, Shawn Russell and Daryl Vogel. Jeff Cade manages a team of guys who use heavy equipment to quarry stone for Kraemer and Sons. We have men in management positions: Frank Mangin, Jason Rider, Tee Welton and Scott Kniprath.

We have six families that work for Christian ministries. Four families work at two different Bible camps. Nathan Lenz works for InterVarsity. Denis Kuhens is a volunteer coordinator with Prison Fellowship.

We have two people in law enforcement and they're both named Jim. We have designers, factory workers and teachers. We also have retired teachers and police detectives, pharmacists, nurses, hospice directors, occupational therapists, and many more. I know I have left out several, especially some of the ladies. In part that's due to the fact that I don't plan on visiting them at their work places!

Ladies, if you are a stay at home mom, all of these principles also apply to you. Your "work" is as at least as valuable and meaningful as all of these other areas. In addition, I will be covering parenting as stewardship in a separate message.

3. ANY kind of work can be a form of stewardship.

Let's return to that quote that was written by someone other than Martin Luther.

The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays—not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship.

So why would God love clean floors and good craftsmanship? God doesn't love these things as ends in themselves but as means to a greater end. If we apply our stewardship principles to cleaning floors, making shoes, every type of work I have covered this morning and more, then we will see the answer. This is part review and part looking forward to the second half of this message next week.

- You were created to work. Work and productivity were built into our very being and nature so it is right to work hard at it.
- This work fulfills the dominion/stewardship mandate. When you work for the right reasons and right methods, you are obeying the very first command in the Bible.
- Work is a means of provision for ourselves and our families
- Work is a provision against idleness
- When we properly steward our work we gain great contentment.
- Work stewardship increases our gospel witness
- Stewardship motivates us by joy instead of fear
- Your work provides opportunity for creativity, development and maximization. You have to look at your own work life and think hard about how you can maximize the potential of your work. You must know that this even applies to the most mundane tasks such as cleaning floors. If cleaning is your primary work, then it is up to you to figure out how, not just to have the cleanest floors in town, but how to actually maximize and develop

floor cleaning itself. You need to discover how to get contentment in that work. You need to ask God why your work should be a source of joy.

- Shoddy and lazy work do not glorify God.

Marvin Olasky, editor of *World* magazine, has this to say about the state of Christian journalism.

"The need is great—and yet, instead of having quality publications, evangelicals are for the most part put to shame. Some of the slimiest publications in terms of morality are far more attractive in style than biblically solid but journalistically stolid local Christian newspapers. In central Texas, for example, a side-by-side graphics and writing comparison of the Bible-believing *Texas Messenger* and the Scripture-spurning *Texas Triangle*, a homosexual monthly, shows that the *Messenger's* mediocre writing and layout do not glorify God. In city after city throughout America, publications that exhibit moral depravity often show technical superiority."¹⁰

So he's saying that unbelievers often do much better work than believers. That ought not to be if you grasp these stewardship principles. You do your work 40-50 hours per week every week so we really need to grasp this vision of stewardship—Maximizing God's blessings for his glory and our benefit.

Rich Maurer
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¹ http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/25-4_Work_and_Witness/25-4_Editorial.pdf

² <http://newscenter.berkeley.edu/2015/01/27/nobel-laureate-and-laser-inventor-charles-townes-dies-at-99/>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ <http://www.templetonprize.org/tpctwtp.html>

⁵ <http://www.templetonprize.org/abouttheprize.html>

⁶ <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/simcha-fisher/rip-charles-townes-brilliant-physicist-man-of-faith#ixzz3U0RjVSAD>

⁷ Some additional quotes from Townes

"Faith is necessary for the scientist even to get started, and deep faith is necessary for him to carry out his toughest tasks. Why? Because he must have confidence that there is order in the universe and that the human mind - in fact his own mind - has a good chance of understanding this order"

(<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0310/p12s02-lire.html>)

"The laws of physics are very special, and the creation of human life is really quite striking. One has to believe that either it was planned or it was a fantastically improbable accident."

(<http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/interviews/a111/esq1201-dec-wil/>)

"I knew I wanted to be a scientist," he says, speaking of his childhood. "Which kind of scientist was the question" (<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0310/p12s02-lire.html>).

⁸ Townes was a member of an UCC church in Berkeley, California

(http://www.ucc.org/charles_townes_obituary_01292015), so there was certainly no gospel preaching going on there.

⁹ <http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/interviews/a111/esq1201-dec-wil/>

¹⁰ <http://www.worldmag.com/world/olasky/intro.html>