

This is Labor Day Weekend.
Labor Day is a strange holiday.
Nobody has wished me a "Happy Labor Day".
We don't get any Labor Day cards.

We don't decorate the house, or give Labor Day gifts.
The florists, candy and greeting card manufacturers
haven't found a way to capitalize on it.
It's a bad weekend for a church
because everyone wants to travel.

Labor Day is different things to different people.
To the factory or office worker,
it may be a day off.
For policemen, who deal with extra traffic
and alcohol abuse, it's a tough day.
To farmers and ranchers, it's just another day
to feed the cattle and work in the fields.
For preachers, it is an opportunity to talk about work.

In the aftermath of the deaths of a number of workers
at the hands of the US military during the 1894 Pullman Strike,
President Grover Cleveland put reconciliation
with Labor as a top political priority.

Fearing further conflict, legislation making Labor Day
a national holiday was rushed through Congress
unanimously and signed into law.
The form for the celebration of Labor Day was outlined
in the first proposal of the holiday:

A street parade to exhibit to the public
"the strength and esprit de corps of the trade and labor organizations,"
followed by a festival for the workers and their families.

Labor Day is celebrated by most Americans
as the symbolic end of the summer.
Families with school-age children take it
as the last chance to get away.
While we call it "Labor Day," we try to do as
little labor as possible and most working people have the day off.

But work is a very important part
of God's will for God's people.
We all have to do it.
If you don't work, you don't get paid,

and you don't eat! It is a necessity of life.

Sadly though, most people live by the mantra,
"Thank God It's Friday."

Why? Because they don't like their jobs.

Seldom do you hear, "Thank God it's Monday!"

We have songs about Monday, Monday,
Can't Trust that Day.

Or, It's just another Manic Monday.

Or if we don't like our job –

Take this Job and Shove it is a personal favorite.

But how can we revolutionize our attitude

toward our work that we might – Take our Job and love it?

In the fairy tale Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,
those annoying little dwarves go marching off
to work every AM singing, "Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to work we go.

For most of us, we drag off to work on a caffeine high
hoping to avoid a traffic jam and punch the clock
before we're 15 min. late, all the while singing,
"I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go!"

Colossians tells us that we are to work as if
we were working for the Lord
not for ourselves or somebody else.
The first thing we have to do to love our work
is make Jesus our boss.

What would happen tomorrow if you arrived
at work and Jesus was your Boss?
Would that make a difference in your attitude?
It SHOULD!
How would you make your boss look good?

Excel at your work.
I think there a several ways we can do that.
We can excel with ethics.
Obey your earthly masters, bosses for us,
not only when their eyes is on you and to win their favor
but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

If Jesus is our boss then we will do
our jobs with honesty and integrity.
Begging the question, who are you
at work when no one is watching?

Have you ever been caught napping at work?

If so here are some things to
Say If Caught Napping at Your Desk

- They told me at the blood bank this might happen.
- This is just a 15 minute power-nap like they raved about in that time management course you sent me to.
- Whew! Guess I left the top off the Whiteout.

You got here just in time.

- I was testing my keyboard for drool resistance.
 - Man! Why did you interrupt me?
- I almost figured out a solution to our company's biggest problem.
- The coffee machine is broken...
 - Someone must've put decaf in the wrong pot...
 - in Jesus' name. Amen.

Integrity and honesty are vital components of ethics.
They are two things no one can take away except for you.
They make us who we are.
When we bear the name of Christ we
represent him in everything we do.

We also have to be honest in ourselves.
We need to be real and true to who God created us to be.
We all have different gifts and growing edges.
Sometimes we want to be liked so much
or please other people that we are willing to sacrifice
what we know to be right.

Nobody feels that more than pastors as
they move from one place to another.
I can remember moving to Brentwood a church of 4,500
from my church in Manchester of less than 200.
I wondered if I could do this.
Were they going to like me?

The senior pastor Howard was new and I remember
our whole first year hearing about Joe the previous pastor.
Joe wouldn't do it that way
or we never did it like that when Joe was here.
Or he just isn't Joe.

I always wondered how Howard dealt with that.
And what I saw was that Howard had to be Howard,
he didn't try to be anyone else.
He had his own unique set of gifts and he knew

he could only be honestly himself.

It was funny but I experienced that same thing
when I left Brentwood almost seven years later.
My successor still calls me and says
Jeremy they are still talking about you.
He takes it all in stride and we laugh.
Even now when I go back to Brentwood
it is like I am a Hollywood star.

As pastors we know people have a hard time
not comparing us to each other especially
if there is a particular one you have gotten close to.
It comes with the territory.

It took two years for Joe's church to become Howard's church
and after his death two years ago it is still Howard's church.
It will take Mack time as well.
All any of us can do in the ministry
or the workplace is be honest about who
we are and do everything with integrity.

Don't sell your soul to the company
store just to get ahead.
God has called us to be imitators of Christ!
We're held to a greater standard .
How we work is one of our greatest tools
for sharing God's love with others.

How would Jesus sell stocks or insurance?
How would He teach, nurse, or doctor?
How would He program computers or manage a company?
How would He flip hamburgers or pump gas?
I believe with absolute integrity!

We can also excel with enthusiasm.
Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord...
If you're doing your job for Jesus you'll do it with all your heart.
Someone who approaches a job with
apathy or indifference is doing it "half-heartedly."
To work with all your heart means that you're working with enthusiasm.
Enthusiasm means "in God."

We're to enthusiastically bring God into our work!
In everything we say and do we are to do it to the glory of God.
Have you ever noticed how hard you work before a vacation?.

Most people triple their output to get everything done before they leave.
People who work consistently as if they're about to leave on vacation will never be without a job.
Even if their company downsizes and they lose a job, word will be out what an enthusiastic worker they are, and they will get another job.
That's what it means to work with all your heart.

We can also excel above expectations.
Verse 24 because you know the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does.
The Message puts it this way
Don't just do the minimum that will get you by.
Do your best. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ.
The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible.

Being Christian doesn't cover up bad work.
If you're doing your job for the approval of Jesus, you'll always do more than the bare minimum.

In every place I have served I was taught to do everything with excellence.
You may have noticed that about me.
I don't like to just get by or do the bare minimum.
I don't want to piecemeal things together especially in the church.
I was taught as many of you that if you do something that you should do it right.

I truly believe in the details and planning especially when it comes to the church and its witness.
I want the best for God and God's people because what I do is a reflection on the God whom I serve.

I want us to excel as a church not because it makes us look good but because it makes God look good.
And I don't want anything we do to make God look bad, or foolish, or irrelevant.
I want our best.

In the time of Jesus,
the Jews were under the domination of the Roman Empire.
A Roman soldier had the legal authority

to demand that any Jew carry his equipment for exactly one mile.

Jews hated to do this,
and they bitterly counted each step.
At exactly one mile, they dropped the load
and said w/ disgust, "There! I've done what is required!"

But Jesus requires a higher standard for His followers.
He said, "If someone forces you to go one mile,
go with him two miles." (Mt. 5:41)
Jesus' point was that a Roman soldier wouldn't
soon forget the person who cheerfully carried
his equipment the second mile.

I want to go the extra mile.
I want people to feel so welcome that they
are actually surprised by our hospitality.
I want people to be surprised about how active
we are in this community and how much service we do.
I want people to be surprised by the amount
of people attending that little white church
who are on fire for God.

Do you do only the bare minimum
or do you go the 2nd mile and leave the mark of excellence on your work?
People always remember second-mile-worker.

Around 1920 a pharmacist bought
a drug store in south Chicago.
Soon he became bored with his job
and began to dream of ways to make it more exciting.
It was during a time when people were
just beginning to call in their orders by phone,
so the man decided to challenge himself
by seeing how quickly he could deliver orders.

When someone called,
he repeated the order aloud,
including the name and address.
As he spoke w/ the caller,
his assistant filled the order
and a driver left to deliver it.

The druggist kept the customer on the phone
chatting until the order arrived.

Most of the customers lived nearby,
but this kind of prompt service was revolutionary.
As word spread, it became the busiest pharmacy
in Chicago and w/in a few years,
Charles Walgreen revolutionized the pharmacy industry
because he decided to go the second mile.

Our work whatever it might be is an important place
that we can honor Jesus Christ and be his witness
if we make him our boss.

Do you want to love your work?
Excel. Excel with ethics.
Excel with enthusiasm. Excel above expectations.
Go the extra mile with integrity and honesty
and you will take your job and love it. Amen.