

Faithful in Our Earthly Calling.

Text: 2 Thess. 3:6-13

Suggested Hymns:

518T65, 346, 357, 516, 383

1) As A Source Of Deep Satisfaction

2) As A Source Of An Honest Livelihood

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, ***6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.***

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Life is a rushing stream, a fleeting panorama of ceaseless activity. Since faith without works is dead, life without action is also dead. No Christian has the right to be lazy, not even if he is rich. Riches may increase a person's prestige, expand his vision, enlarge his sphere of influence; but they do not end his divinely imposed obligation to work, to render some constructive service in one capacity or another, for his own and his neighbour's good, as long as God gives health and strength.

We speak of old age security and pensions, and we may well do so because all too soon our hands shall be feeble, our steps uncertain, and our eyesight dim. But to want to enter into a state of idleness before time and, perhaps, be supported by the generosity of others at the age of fifty is certainly against the moral code of the Bible. While a person is still in possession of all faculties, and still full of the vigour of manhood and womanhood, to cast aside carelessly the accumulated wisdom and experience of a rich and useful life is certainly wrong.

Moses retained his vigour to a grand old age. We read in Deuteronomy 34:7 that *His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died.*

At fifty, Noah Webster began his study of 17 languages. At seventy, Vanderbilt developed the railroads of America.

At eighty, Gladstone headed the British government; Verdi completed three famous compositions; Victor Hugo wrote a great novel; Edison was busy in his laboratory; and Benjamin West was still painting and the president of the Royal Academy.

Therefore let us use our talents until God Himself takes them from us. Let us consider *Our Earthly Calling*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Our Earthly Calling As A Source Of Deep Satisfaction.

Our earthly calling is of God. Our text is a command to work, issued in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the Thessalonians were inclined to idleness and supposing the Last Day at hand, abandoned their work.¹ In this they did wrong, missing the deep satisfaction of waiting patiently for Christ and of being faithful in their earthly calling.

We spend a quarter of a lifetime in many schools to equip ourselves for life's work. As we proceed, God mercifully guides our steps, answers our prayers, directs our choices, until we find a channel of service, some useful, God-pleasing work or profession.

Cain was a farmer, Abel a shepherd, Aaron a priest, Daniel a statesman, Joseph a carpenter, Mary a housewife, Dorcas a dress-maker, Lydia a seller of

purple, Peter a fisherman, Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews, and Luke was a physician.

Even in the Garden of Eden, God gave our first parents something to do as we read in Genesis 2:15, ¹⁵ *Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.* And in Genesis 1:28 God said, *“Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* This all involves work.

Likewise the general Law has never been repealed. We read in Genesis 3:19, ¹⁹ *In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.*

Every Christian therefore, in his earthly calling, however high or lowly it may be, if and only if he works in the name of Jesus to the glory of God, has the assurance of divine approval on his labours and divine protection in his ways.²

Our earthly calling must avoid offence. Our earthly calling must never supersede our heavenly calling, nor must it ever interfere with it. Scripture says in 2 Timothy 1:9 that Christ *has saved us and called us with a holy calling.* And we read in Matthew 6:33 that we are to *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*

However, by becoming fanatic about their religion to the extent of despising their earthly calling, neglecting their fields and their business, working little or not at all, the Thessalonians were reprovved because they were giving offence to the Church and the world.

Their conduct is branded as *“disorderly,”* out of line, as destructive of Christian ideals and faith, because they disregarded the other moral and religious principles which the disciples had so diligently taught to them.

Hence the admonition to the faithful, not to condone such loose conduct, but to withdraw from those refusing to work, so that they might be ashamed and repent. Our text says, ⁶ *But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.*

Just after our text we read these words, ¹⁴ *And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.* ¹⁵ *Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*³

The shepherds struck the correct balance of work and worship, religion and toil. After hastening to Bethlehem, worshiping the Christ-child and telling others about it, they returned to their sheep, glorifying God. For able-bodied men to avoid visible means of support is cause for suspicion. The devil finds work for idle hands. To have a calling and be faithful in it is both honourable and orderly, a cause for deep joy and inner satisfaction.

Our earthly calling creates self-respect. Knowing the disgraceful attitude and loafing of some of the people in Thessalonica, Paul and his co-workers made doubly sure not to give the impression of week-day laziness. They made it a point to go the second mile. They *“worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.”*

They did this out of hours, working physically in their spare moments at their trade. Remember that Paul was skilled in tent-making. This was in addition to their heavy schedule of duties as apostles, pastors, evangelists, and missionary workers. Duties faithfully discharged bring a measure of satisfaction and joy to the heart, but if they are neglected, they become more and more troublesome, like debts not paid.

Do you have an occupation, a profession, a routine of daily duties? Give thanks to almighty God. Searching for employment is no easy task. Working is far easier and more preferable. The conviction that reverses are brought on by your own laziness, carelessness, neglect, dishonesty, makes a bad situation worse. But to know that you are appreciated, needed, and successful in your earthly calling makes for self-respect and the joy of living.

Our earthly calling gives an example for others. The tremendous work⁴ and tireless labours of Paul no doubt had a favourable effect on some of the Thessalonians. Even though Paul did some tent making he still accepted financial support from his congregations.⁵ While at Thessalonica, he accepted a subsidy from the Philippians.⁶

He toiled with his own hands in all faith and in all humility to stir the Thessalonians to zeal and activity by his example, as our text says, ***not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.***

Luther had a busy life. Edison's who invented the light bulb had many inventions. Charles Evan Hughes wrote *"I believe in work, hard work and long hours of work. Men do not break down from overwork but from worry and idleness."*⁷

The best example of all, is that of Jesus. He worked for Mary and Joseph as a matter of course.⁸ He was called ***"the carpenter."***⁹ *"He must have risen with the light And patiently toiled until the night,"*¹⁰ not too proud to frame shelters for cattle with His holy hands or dwellings for human living.

How patiently Jesus met all the demands of His earthly calling, and how faithfully He fulfilled His divine mission, even to wearing the scarlet robe of our guilt, the thorny crown of our sins, to the piercing of the hands so often lifted in blessing and of the side from which flowed the stream that gave life and hope to the world.

We read in Hebrews 12:2, ***looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

If you believe in Jesus with all your heart, you will find deep satisfaction in every opportunity to be an example and inspiration to other people, and also in the duties of your earthly calling.

You mothers, whose work is never done, remember the word of Jesus in Matthew 18:5, ***Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.*** Learn to take an exalted view of your calling whatever it maybe. Teachers who shape the lives of children, carpenters as builders of homes, business men as moving the wheels of industry, farmers as setting the tables of the world, dairymen as painting the colour on baby's cheeks, and ministers and missionaries as ambassadors of Christ.

2. Our Earthly Calling As A Source Of An Honest Livelihood.

Our earthly calling as working for a living. We pray for health, and rightly so. At the same time we do everything in our power to make our prayer come true, for example - safety measures, wholesome food, a balanced program of life, rest, exercise, and medical attention.

Likewise we pray earnestly for daily bread, at the same time walking circumspectly; we practice good management, wisely using our resources, and above all, we work.

Those not willing to work, do not deserve to eat. Our text says, ¹⁰ ***For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.*** This does not apply to the retired, the infirm, those who are involuntarily out of work, but to those who despise and hate work when God has given them ability and opportunity for gainful employment.

It is not drudgery for the birds to build their nests in the springtime, nor for the little inhabitants of the forest to gather their cache of nuts before the deep snows of winter. *“Nothing is troublesome that we do willingly.”*¹¹ We should not look upon our work as drudgery or degrading to work for a living. Rather let us perform our daily duties with a song in our heart and a light in our eye, knowing that the labourer is worthy of his hire.

The key to success is to have your heart in your work. Ships that lie at anchor are a liability. Silver unused will tarnish. Idle wishes and lost opportunities will not support you. Busy-bodies get nowhere fast.

To leave footprints on the sands of time, you must put on work-shoes. To be faithful in much, begins by being faithful in the least.¹² We are to do our own business with singleness of heart, eating the labour of our own hands.¹³

We read in 1 Thessalonians 4:11 that ***we are to aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,***¹² ***that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.*** And in Colossians 3:22, ²² ***Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.***

We are to eat our own bread. Our text continues, ¹¹ ***For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but***

are busybodies. ¹² Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

We pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us our daily bread." This means bread rightfully coming to us. *"Eat your bread with joy, ... for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform."*¹⁴

God says in Genesis 3:19, *¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.* God has not bound Himself to this law, but He has bound us to it. God says in 1 Tim. 5:8, *⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

And *"if man's work is from sun to sun, woman's work is never done."* The true beauty of Mother's hands lies not in polished finger-nails, but in the lines of toil by which she, too, true to her earthly calling, eats her own bread. Laziness was not the spirit of our pioneer fathers and mothers. It was their hard work, courage, and by not wasting things helped make Australia great.

Are we wiser and happier than they were? Now we have machines, computers, over-production, fierce competition, poverty, fraud, class hatred, theatres and pubs crowded day and night with idle multitudes, lovers of pleasure, people outwitting each other, divorcing each other, slugging each other for profit, playing the races, gambling and plotting in the hope of snatching each others bread!

Christians, beware of becoming too broad, lest you find yourselves on the broad way. Beware of the pitfalls, get-rich-quick schemes and deceitful slogans of the world. Beware of the false standard: *"Big money, big man; little money, little man; no money, nobody."*

Rather work quietly, patiently, eating your own bread. Scripture says in 1 Timothy 6:6-10, *⁶ Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have

strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

This reminds us of the Gospel lesson for today where we read, ³³ *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*¹⁵

Sharing with others. Our text says ¹³ *But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.* The Truckee River in California has its source in one of the most beautiful lakes of the world and yet it ends miserably in the Pyramid Lakes of the Nevada desert. Similarly the beautiful Jordan River ends in the Dead Sea.

People who pursue their earthly calling merely for purposes of self-accumulation, joining house to house,¹⁶ faring sumptuously every day,¹⁷ and refusing to share, however promising their beginning, are rushing on to a misspent, wasted life.

The goal of our earthly calling is not merely an honest livelihood for ourselves, but to be able to share with others. We are to share as God has prospered us. We read in 1 John 3:17-18, ¹⁷ *But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?* ¹⁸ *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

Let us place our earthly calling in the service of our heavenly calling. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 2 Thessalonians 2

² Psalm 91:11

³ 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

⁴ 2 Corinthians 11:23

⁵ 1 Cor. 9:7-14; Gal. 6:6

⁶ Phil. 4:16

⁷ Dissipation

⁸ Luke 2:51

⁹ Mark 6:3

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- ¹⁰ From “A Converts Reason why” no. 44, A. J. Hayes,
¹¹ Thomas Jefferson
¹² Luke 16:10-12
¹³ Psalm 128:2
¹⁴ Ecclesiastes 9:7a, 9b
¹⁵ Matthew 6:33
¹⁶ Isa. 5:8
¹⁷ Luke 16:19