

“Pleasing Labor”

Hebrews 1:3, 13:1-7 & 15-16, Philippians 4:8

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On the farm, there were many jobs that were less than pleasant. It seemed we always baled hay on the hottest days of the year. My Dad always joked that we had an Armstrong hay bale elevator, meaning you stood on the wagon and threw the 60 pound bales up over your head into the hay mow. With every bale a fresh layer of chaff coated your sweaty body. Of course there were an array of jobs involving handling animal waste. The most despised was climbing down into the dark sediment pit and shoveling out all the disgusting stuff that accumulated down there. Of course milking 8 hours everyday at 4:30 am and 4:30 pm including the hottest day, coldest day, and every holiday got more than a little monotonous. When I would complain, my Dad would say, “But think of the end result of your work.” Your work is allowing families to enjoy affordable fresh milk for their breakfast, delicious ice cream for celebrations, and an abundance of cheese pizza. As I teenager I would grunt, shake my head and think, that proves it my dad is crazy. Later I realized the great wisdom in his words.

This morning’s scripture proclaims, **Hebrews 13:1 “Continue to love each other with true Christian love.” Hebrews 13:15-16 “With Jesus’ help, let us continually offer our sacrifice of praise to God by proclaiming the glory of God’s name. Don’t forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need for such sacrifices are very pleasing to God.”** Pleasing labor is doing everything with love and in a worshipful manner bringing praise to God. Labor is much more than our job, it is everything we do. Webster dictionary defines labor as, “an expenditure of physical or mental effort”; “human activity that provides goods or services”.

Pleasing labor shows love in every thought and every activity. Worship that is pleasing to God is a 24/7 commitment to have all our thoughts, words, and deeds be holy, bringing, praise, honor and glory to God and love to all around us. Greg Yount said, “We should make work what we live to do for the Lord, not just what we do to live.”

This pleasing labor is to be performed by all no matter your age. A 4-year-old child’s next-door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little girl went into the old gentleman’s yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When her mother asked what she had said to the neighbor, the little girl said, “Nothing, I just helped him cry.” This seemingly small act is pleasing labor for it demonstrates comforting love and glorifies God.

Pleasing labor is to be performed wherever you find yourself right now. There was a man who grew tired of his life and the pressure of his career, so he applied to a monastery to be accepted for a life of contemplation. The leader said to him, “Do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience? The man replied, “I understand for the rest of my life I will be obedient to you, as Christ leads you.” “Then I will tell you what to do. Go back to your family and career and serve faithfully in the place where God has placed you.”

Jesus gave us a perfect example of pleasing labor to follow. A theme throughout Hebrews is Jesus is the great high priest. In the Old Testament, the high priest’s pleasing labor was to be a mediator between God and people. The people came to the High Priest to learn the will of God and the high priest made atoning sacrifices for the people. Jesus perfectly performs both. Jesus is God and reveals not only God’s will but also God’s character. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is the ultimate atoning sacrifice capable of forgiving all people of all of their sins.

Jesus had the dirtiest, most repugnant job of all time. Jesus took on every sin and experienced every person’s pain, guilt, disease, fears, and imperfection on the cross. Jesus knew this was going to be excruciating labor. Jesus prayed for God to excuse him from this labor so intently that he sweated blood in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus did this pleasing labor for you and all of us. Jesus focused on the end result of his labor knowing his sacrifice will forgive every person of every sin, making it possible for all people to come home to heaven where all God’s children will be united in perfect harmony having every tear wiped away and every imperfection made whole and perfected for eternity. Jesus was motivated to do the pleasing labor of the cross by thinking of you joyfully enjoying the splendor of heaven. Jesus made his sacrifice without compliant, procrastination, or wavering, because he was inspired by the anticipated joy of enjoying eternity with you. Jesus

the high priest is our model of how to live a life of pleasing labor. Hebrews begins, **Hebrews 1:3** “Jesus, the Son reflects God’s own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly. Jesus sustains the universe by the mighty power of his command. After Jesus died to cleanse us from the stain of sin, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God of heaven.” We are to follow Jesus example demonstrating God’s love in every thought and activity. We should strive to teach like Jesus, heal like Jesus, act like Jesus and to love like Jesus. Our risen Lord always goes before us equipping, empowering and supporting us to live out our faith each and every day.

Pleasing labor entails every aspect of our life and glorifies God in all we do. The third chapter of Hebrews states, **Hebrews 3:1-2** “Therefore, brothers and sisters, holy partners in a heavenly calling, consider that Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses also "was faithful in all God's house." Your ordinary daily life, your routine daily tasks are to be a holy partnership with God fulfilling a heavenly calling. Your love for everyone proclaims the glorious grace of God. Sacrificial labor, doing good and sharing what you have pleases God.

Hebrews then gives us a specific list of pleasing labors in which to be engaged. **Hebrews 13:2** “Show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!” Hospitality is helping other people feel comfortable and loved. Hospitality is helping someone stand up against a bully. Hospitality is making sure all people have food, clothes, shelter, education and health care. Hospitality is doing the dishes for your family, adding value to another’s life, humbly serving. Hospitality is being with another and sometimes helping them cry.

Hebrews continues **Hebrews 13:3** “Don’t forget about those in prison. Suffer with them as though you were there yourself. Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, as though you feel their pain in your own bodies.” Jesus experienced all our sorrows and our every pain on the cross and sacrificed his life so in time every pain and sorrow can be healed. Pleasing labor is standing with and advocating for justice and freedom for all prisoners. There are many people who are in prisons without bars. Imprisoned by war, greed, poverty, addictions, politics, depression, isms, health issues, prejudices, lack of education and on and on. Don’t forgot about anyone who is struggling, put your compassion for them into action.

Scripture’s list of pleasing labor includes **Hebrews 13:4a** “Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage.” Sometimes the people we neglect the most are those closest to us. If you are married, then pleasing labor is spending intentional time every day working on your marriage, treating your spouse with honor and enjoying your mutual love. Compliment your spouse every day. Celebrate your blessings. Serve others together.

Hebrews advises **Hebrews 13:5a** “Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have.” While on a trip to Switzerland, an America businessman was watching a Swiss clockmaker carving the case of an ornate cuckoo clock. As the businessman watched the clockmaker carve out the case, he was astounded at his slow rate of progress. The businessman finally said, “My good man, you’ll never make much money that way.” “Sir,” the clockmaker replied, “I am not making money, I am making cuckoo clocks.” Often your pleasing labor will not be compensated with money rather by knowing you brought beauty and enrichment into another person’s life.

Pleasing labor involves our thoughts. **Hebrews 13:7** “Remember your leaders who first taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and trust the Lord as they do.” The apostle Paul wrote, **Philippians 4:8** “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Pleasing worship to God is sacrificial, love permeated labor. Labor that entails every activity, every aspect of life and every thought. The next time you begin to feel disgruntled by your labors think of the end result. Is your labor showing love for another, is it adding value to another person’s life, is it bringing a slice of heaven to earth? Then you are a holy partner with Jesus fulfilling your heavenly calling. Then you are worshiping God and God is well pleased with you. Amen