

## Into This Shared Work

John 9:4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 19, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

### ➤ Introduction

You can have a couple of guys in high school who like to sleep in and who love pizza and hamburgers and turn them into people who will pay attention to the nutritional value of their food and get up at 5:00 a.m. if they develop an interest in organized sports. They say that participation in organized sports and teach you valuable life skills. You learn teamwork, discipline, the value of exercise and hard work, and the ability to focus on a shared goal. All of these values and skills help a person make the most of their career and life. There is something Biblical about this. Can we learn to view the accomplishments, projects, habits and even everyday chores that make up the work of our lives as working toward a common goal, that matches and is part of a whole that is made up of the work of others in our church and in other churches that moves forward the plan of our Creator. It's not as random as it might appear. The works of our lives are a shared work guided by the Holy Spirit. Here's what I've learned.

### ➤ Set the Stage

#### John 9:4

To set the stage, we look at something Jesus said in John's Gospel (9:4). In chapter eight, Jesus had an argument with the religious authorities in which He said (8:58), "before Abraham was, I am." (He would repeat this in John 18:5-6) It was a plain declaration that He was God. Don't believe anyone who says that Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God. He did so clearly. After that episode, He and His disciples encountered a man born blind and the disciples inquired why this happened. He replied that, in this case, his troubles involved the work of God to be revealed, and then He healed him. It was in this context that Jesus declared that He must work the works of God the Father while it was still day, for night was coming. Scholars believe that "day" here refers to the days of His life on earth.

#### Ephesians 2:10

The Bible, in Ephesians (2:10) makes a similar claim for us, that we were created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. These works, the sum total of the good done with our lives, reflects that we are the workmanship of God. A rare word, used only here and in Romans 1:20 describing the whole of Creation, "workmanship" is the root word for the modern word "poem." But "poem" for the ancients, had a broader definition than the word has in modern usage. For us, a poem is a carefully constructed message in words, for them a "poem" was any great work of genius. We are the poetry of God in Christ, and He makes His work out of our lives. Still, I looked for some examples of the "works" that have been prepared beforehand for us, and I was somewhat surprised at what I found. Jesus Himself said that His followers would be involved in even greater works than His, which implies that miracles are for today, not just back then. I also reflected on valuable activities such as worship, prayer, study and practice of Scripture, witness, service and fellowship. Our works surely involve these. I

wondered if there were more, but I found that our work is to believe (John 6:28-29). That seems a little vague, but I found that attitude makes all the difference.

- Application: Take time to consider what you are building with your habits and your attitude toward everyday life; toward work we do at home, during employment, and at church.

There's a few passages that speak little of the specific works, but much about attitude and influence. *Philippians 2:14-15* says "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world," *Colossians 3:23* tells us to "do all things as unto the Lord." The work is not just special projects-miracles, teaching, etc. It is how we go about everyday life. It is doing the "all things" without grumbling and disputing. 2 *Corinthians 3:1-3* tell us that the Apostle Paul's work was written on his heart and it was about the people he influenced. Who have you influenced? How much do you care for them. That will speak much about the works of your life.

- Conclusion

The years of the life of our Lord Jesus was the "day" that He had to do the works of His life. We are the same. What we do, and perhaps more importantly, the attitude with which we do them, make up the accomplishment and works of our lives that are joined together by God in a shared work that is like a "poem", an accomplishment, a work of art, a project that makes our lives like a tapestry that is created by the Holy Spirit that serves Christ and honors God the Father. Look at your life as part of a shared work, a valuable and holy work in which all that you do is a part.