

Call to Worship

Nehemiah 4:6; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Proverbs 14:23; 1 Corinthians 3:8-9

We continued to build the wall. All of it was joined together, and it reached half of its intended height because the people were eager to work.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. If either should fall, one can pick up the other. But how miserable are those who fall and don't have a companion to help them up!

There is profit in hard work, but mere talk leads to poverty.

The one who plants and the one who waters work together, but each one will receive their own reward for their own labor. We are God's coworkers.

Prayer of Invocation

Lord we are grateful for the gifts and talents that you have given each of us , which are differing in kind in order to accomplish the work before us. Be with us on this long weekend as we celebrate the work done and yet to be done in our lives. Send your Spirit now to lead us in worship and show us the way forward. Amen.

The Word

Deuteronomy 28:1-12; Psalm 90:17

Now if you really obey the Lord your God's voice, by carefully keeping all his commandments that I am giving you right now, then the Lord your God will set you high above all nations on earth.

All these blessings will come upon you and find you if you obey the Lord your God's voice: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the field.

Your own fertility, your soil's produce, and your livestock's offspring—the young of both cattle and flocks—will be blessed. **Your basket and your kneading bowl will be blessed. You will be blessed when you are out and about and blessed when you come back.**

The Lord will defeat any enemies who attack you. They will come against you from one direction but will run for their lives away from you in seven different directions. **The Lord will command the blessing to be with you—in your barns and on all the work you do—and he will bless you on the land the Lord your God is giving you.**

The Lord will establish you as his own, a holy nation, just as he swore to you, if you keep the Lord your God's commandments and walk in his ways. **All the earth's peoples will see that you are called by the Lord's name, and they will be in awe of you.**

The Lord will make good things abound for you—whether the fertility of your womb, your livestock's offspring, or your fertile soil's produce—on the very land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give to you. **The Lord will open up for you his own well-stocked storehouse,**

the heavens, providing your land with rain at just the right time and blessing all your work. You will lend to many nations, but you won't have any need to borrow.

Let the kindness of the Lord our God be over us. Make the work of our hands last.

Make the work of our hands last!

Living the Word

Labor Day is a United States federal holiday which originated on September 5, 1882 as the Central Labor Union of New York City sought to create a day off work for the working citizens.

Today the people of USA celebrate Labor Day with a little less fanfare than they did at the end of the 19th Century. Some cities hold parades and community picnics. Many politicians "kick off" their political campaigns by holding rallies on Labor Day.

Americans consider Labor Day as the end of the summer, and most years, the beaches and other popular resort areas are packed with people enjoying one last three-day long weekend. In addition to Labor Day being a general celebration for the end of summer, some will have a focus on American football, since this is when the seasons begin. That may look very different this year as well.

Labor Day in the United States is not very 'laborious' any more yet it is a holiday celebrated by every student, worker, and non-worker. Its origins were based in the labor movement of the United States over one hundred years ago in a very different time for the country. Now, the celebration has strayed significantly from its original roots.

Most activities nowadays have little or nothing to do with the original Labor Day from the 19th century. However, this does not stop many Americans from enjoying the day off with their friends and family, through Zoom and Facetime if not together...

Here are three scriptures that address work and labor for us to look at: The apostle Paul wrote this in his first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 4 verses 11-12: "*Aim to live quietly, mind your own business, and earn your own living, just as I told you. That way you'll behave appropriately toward outsiders, and you won't be in need.*"

Paul is reminding the Thessalonians that though they are Christians now...many around them are not, and they need to be good neighbors, by not stirring up trouble with their actions, but by minding their own business and continuing to work, as an example to others, of their new 'Christian way of being'.

In Paul's second letter to the same community he re-emphasizes, with even stronger wording: 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13 "*Even when we were with you, we were giving you this command: "If anyone doesn't want to work, they shouldn't eat." We hear that some of you are living an undisciplined life. They aren't working, but they are meddling in other people's business.*

By the Lord Jesus Christ, we command and encourage such people to work quietly and put their own food on the table. Brothers and sisters, don't get discouraged in doing what is right."

As Christians we are examples for others. Sometimes we forget how important it is for us to be who God has called us to be as Christians; especially, in this time of history when people are questioning the value of God and Christ and the church. We are never alone in our labors. God works through us as we work for others.

The first two verses of Psalm 127 reminds us of that: "*Unless it is the LORD who builds the house, the builders' work is pointless. Unless it is the LORD who protects the city, the guard on duty is pointless. It is pointless that you get up early and stay up late, eating the bread of hard labor because God gives sleep to those he loves.*"

Another reminder of the need for Sabbath in the midst of our work. God has created us to do enough work without doing more than enough...Of course this is measured differently by each of us and we each have to decide if we want to balance our lives in our way or in the way our Creator planned for us.

Here's how many Americans could — and want — to 'work longer hours': In March of this year, nearly 62.7 percent of individuals over the age of 16 who were interested in working were either doing so or were hunting for a job. By June it had dropped to 61.5 percent.

You might have heard this figure pop up when the jobs report comes out; it's known as the "labor-force participation rate." It's a figure that's been declining since 2007. And it's a figure that still hasn't returned to pre-recession levels.

Global labor force participation has shown a steady decline since 1990. According to the World Bank, the global labor participation rate stood at 61.4% at the end of 2018, down from 63% a decade earlier.

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Economists watch the labor-force participation rate closely because it's seen as an indicator of bigger and important trends such as how much of the population has aged-out of the workforce, the matchup between worker skills and jobs and how the costs of working such as childcare and commuting compare to earnings. This year COVID -19 has caused significant month to month changes.

The share of men working has been in decline since the 1970s. But for women, labor-force participation climbed during much of the same period until something changed in recent years. Some think it's the difficulty of balancing work responsibilities and costs with family needs.

So does that mean that all these workers could just elect to go back to working full-time? 93 percent of adults not in the labor force are at home caring for children, other relatives or have returned to school or taken on other tasks important to their families. This isn't a wrong thing, it just changes the statistics.

Well, seasonally adjusted federal data indicates that nearly 27 million people worked part-time in June. That was about 18 percent of the labor force. And, since the same number of people were working part-time a year ago, there are no signs this group is growing. But that figure does remain elevated when compared to the years before the recession.

Of course, some of these workers are teenagers. If they rank among the lucky few who found summer and after-school jobs, they really might not want or be available to work any additional hours. It may also include those working part-time in retirement.

But the vast majority -- about 20.4 million part-time workers have other responsibilities that demand their time.

Many workers are already putting in more than a full-time week. The average American full-time employee already puts in an average of 47 hours each week. 1.8 million people have two part-time jobs. But since these workers are concentrated in low-pay industries, some of them would really prefer a single full-time job. Still, if they found one, this may not actually translate to more hours than they work right now.

About 6.1 million people worked part-time in June because their employer cut their hours or because the only jobs they could find were part-time gigs. These people, in most cases, would like to work more. So, perhaps this whole group, about 16.3 million people -- 10.3 percent of the American labor force as of June -- could work more hours. That's if they could find an employer who wants and needs them.

So what is the blessing of labor? It is to have or have had good labor. Work that gives you a way to care for yourself and your family.

When we were first married, Bob worked at home on the dairy farm. I worked retail at a store in town. When we both got some time off, I would be anxiously waiting to do something together.

Bob would load up his fish pole, call his buddies and go fishing, with the parting comment: "I have to go to feed the family." It sounded a bit dubious to me, but he told me it was a labor of love... I soon bought myself a pole and went along to help "feed the family..." He says the same for hunting season, which begins now with bow hunting and goes through January. I just let him have that one.

Another thing that I have said often is- "Some people labor at work they love, but they have long hours or aren't paid enough for all of their work. Others aren't passionate about their work, but put in their 40 hours and live for their weekends and vacations."

Neither are wrong. One labor blessing is that for most of us we did or can decide which of these kinds of labor are best for us.

How is Labor Day celebrated when you have finished your vocation? In retirement you may choose to labor as a volunteer, sharing your time by helping in the community or family in new ways. It

might be celebrated in the sharing of the funds earned over the years with someone who couldn't work or earn what you did and now being able to share some of the blessings that you have earned.

It is a blessing to choose and balance our lives in a way that we are fulfilled in what we labor in and what we accomplish, while still staying rested enough to be healthy and even tempered with each other. We are able to contribute to 'the good of the whole' by labor that serves others as well as ourselves.

Some blessed labor doesn't bring any or much financial gain, but contributes time so others can support those around them. I would argue with anyone who thinks that babysitting or homemaking isn't laborious.

In fact, I have often said that we trust the people we love the most to those who make the least. For example: our care staffs at nursing facilities and hospitals, those we trust our children's education to – both scholastically and spiritually.

Just as chopping wood heats twice: once, when it is chopped and again when it heats the house; so it is with the blessings of labor. We can be blessed in the doing and blessing in the knowledge that those who receive from our work are also being blessed.

As we come together to share the loaf and the cup offered to us as Christians, it is easy to come knowing there is enough for all of us. God has also supplied enough food, and work, and grace for everyone. As you come to receive as the body of Christ gathered in this place, remember that we need to labor to feed not just ourselves, but the whole world.

PRAY

Holy Communion

Invitation

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who loved him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore let us confess our sin before God and one another.

Confession and Pardon

Lord you have honored us with your unfailing covenant to be with us always. We can trust you, but we don't; we can know you are ever present, but we forget; we can build a faith in you to get us through the good and the bad times, yet we are too busy building our faith around the people and things of this world. Forgive us we pray.

(Silent Prayer)

In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven. **In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven.**

Praise God!

The Great Thanksgiving

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, is yours.

Thanks be to God!

Let us give God praise and glory.

We praise God for the surpassing gift of Jesus Christ.

We thank you, God, for this meal that your child, Jesus gave us.

In it are represented your many gifts to us:

Gifts of daily food, part of your generous creation.

Commemoration of the time you gave manna in the wilderness.

Remembrance of the times that Jesus fed the multitudes.

Recalling the sadness of the last meal he had with his disciples.

A foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have promised.

Memories of mealtimes with friends and with those who have gone before us.

Celebrations of loving relationships, a meeting place for us with you.

The promise that you will sustain us through all life.

The gift of being able to come to your table prompts us not to forget those who are without food and those who are not yet welcomed to your table, strengthens us for the tasks of daily living, empowers us with your Spirit for the difficult times.

We want to know you, God.

We want to experience you, Jesus Christ.

We want to breathe you in, Holy Spirit.

Come, meet us now at this table, pouring out your Spirit on us and on this bread and cup.

You alone have created us.

You alone nourish us.

You alone can guide us to be your children.

What we have is nothing, if you are not in our lives. We give ourselves to you here and now. Thank you for your great love given through Jesus Christ and given in this communion. Amen.

And now with the confidence of the children of God, let us pray the Lord's Prayer: