

Theme: Working With God.

Text: Acts 10:38b ---"...he went ~~about~~
about doing good and healing all
that were oppressed by the devil,
for God was with him.

Proposition: Just as the good that
Jesus did and does is because God
was with Him, so is our best work
done when we can feel sincerely that
we are working with God.

Date written: Sept. 1, 1962.

Dates and places used:

9-2-62 - Montrose, Colo.

9-5-65 (Blanco & Alamosa), Colo.

8-31-69 ~~at~~ Boca, Fla.

Introduction:

1. A man who looked every~~bit~~ bit the part of a tramp or hobo knocked at the door of a home, and asked for some food. The lady of the house looked him over, then countered with the question, "Do you want employment?"

"Lady," answered the tramp, "you means well, but you can't make work sound any more inviting by using words of three syllables."

(The Master Book of Humorous Illustrations, Leewin B. Williams, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1938, # 1605, p.419)

2. There are people who feel that way about most work most of the time! There are times when all of us are tired of our work and seek a vacation from it. Sometimes the things we do on our vacations are just as much work as the daily job; but the fact that such things are a change in pace, are different from our ~~routine~~ routine jobs, are in the realm of the unknown or unfamiliar, are areas of activities in which we are not skilled, makes them good subjects for curiosity and our inept efforts.

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A man who looked every day at the door of a room, and asked for some food. The lady of the house looked him over, and considered with the question, "do you want an employment?" "Yes," answered the man, "you mean well, but you can't make work sound any more inviting by using words of three syllables." The master took of humorous lines, "Beasts B. Williams, Washington-Cockebury, 1933, p. 100, p. 419"

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that way about most work most of the time! There are times when all of us are tired of our work and seek a vacation from it. Sometimes the things we do in our vacations are just as much work as the daily job; but the fact that such things are a change in pace, are different from our routine jobs, and in the realm of the unknown or unfamiliar, are areas of activities in which we are not skilled, makes them good subjects for curiosity and our finest efforts.

3. Vacations must end, however, and we must return to our daily work eventually. What do you think of the daily job, the work? Why do you do it? Do you really hate it, or do you feel at home with it so that you sort of are glad to get back to it once in a while?

4. This is the time, near Labor Day, to think of the subject "work." It is the time to assess its meaning and purpose. In a christian service of worship we attempt to do this from the christian viewpoint, specifically. To know anything about the christian attitude toward work the logical first person to turn to is Jesus Christ himself.

5. Our Scripture points out that

I. Jesus did his work of deeds and words in the assurance that God was with him.

Z 1. ~~Peter~~ Our Scripture words are part of a speech which Peter made to Cornelius. Cornelius was a Gentile probably a Greek. Up to this time Peter had ~~s~~ told the gospel message

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primarily to Jews. In so doing he often told the Jews that they had murdered Jesus; but that because of the Resurrection Jesus still lives; that they could still repent of their rejection and murder of him and accept him as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah and Redeemer, and be forgiven. His message to Gentiles, such as Cornelius, had to be a bit different; for the message about a Messiah would have had little meaning to them. Instead of painting him as the hoped-for Messiah, Peter told the Gentiles of a resurrected saviour whose blessings are for all mankind and all nations. He told them about the works of love and mercy and good which Jesus did when he lived a physical life here on earth. He made it clear why Jesus was able to do these things, when he said, "he went about doing good and healing all those that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." (v.38b--RSV).

2. It is interesting to note the reference to the devil. Peter, Luke who wrote this account, and most of the people of Christ's time, and evidently even Jesus himself, seemed

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It is interesting to note the reference to the devil. Peter, who wrote this account, and most of the people of Christ's time, and evidently even Jesus himself, seemed

to think that the bad things of life -- poverty, illness, wrongdoing -- are the works of an intelligent but evil being, called the devil, or Satan; This evil power had demons and wicked angels to help him in his bad works. There are people today who still believe that such evil things do exist. There are others who doubt the existence of an extremely powerful prince of evil, who is surrounded and aided by a court of wrongdoers of lesser power. To believe in the devil and his helpers as real is, it seems to some, to lessen and shirk our own sense of responsibility; for we can blame the devil for our wrong doing, for tempting us, if we are weak. It seems more logical to suppose that within each person is the capacity to choose to do good or evil; that some bad and some good will come to each person from the natural world in which he lives, simply because he is alive, and not according to his degree of morality. The rejection by most people of the devil concept has been accomplished by a growing sense of personal choice and responsibility. ~~this is xis xas xit~~ It seems

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to many of us that this is as it should be. The bulk of Jesus' reported teachings back this up. Don't blame things that go wrong on the devil; but blame them on ourself, on others, or on forces around you. Because of wrong choices, because of inadequate understanding of the natural processes of God with which we live, or simply because we belong to humanity and share in both the general good and evil -- these may be the explanations of the devilish things in our lives.

3. This, however, is a sideline discussion, suggested by our Scripture but not vital to our main thought. Whatever the cause of pain, wrongdoing, injustice and other evil, Peter was correct in telling his hearers that Jesus was effectively active in doing good to and healing those who needed help; and that Jesus was able to do so because God was with him.

4. There are other accounts of the life of Jesus which indicate how strongly he sensed the presence of God, and how much he depended on strength given him by God. At

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the very start of his ministry he gained strength from God to overcome the temptations, which the writer says Satan placed before him. When he cleansed the temple of the money-changers, he did so from the conviction that his father's house should be a place of prayer and not a business house. Once when he healed a paralytic he did it in such a way that those who saw it gave praise where Jesus wanted it, ~~saying~~ saying "they glorified God who had given such authority to men." (Mt. 9:8 --RSV). Again and again in the gospels are statements to indicate Jesus' constant awareness that God was with him when he was doing his various and good works.

5. Here is a sound indication of the Christian attitude toward work. From Jesus

II. The christian knows that his work should be such that he can feel that God is with him in it.

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III. The Christian knows that his
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 farmer, who had been digging a well
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in, which meant many extra hours of work. Hastily looking about and seeing no one, Pat placed his coat and cap on the edge of the well, then hid in a nearby woods. Assuming he was at the bottom of the well, a score of neighbors soon were engaged in frantically throwing out dirt. When the job was done, Pat~~er~~ emerged from the woods and thanked his good neighbors for their voluntary services. (400 More Snappy Stories That Preachers Tell, Paul E. Holdcraft, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953, #305, p. 91).

2. Maybe Pat was taking advantage of his neighbors a bit, but wasn't it good that he knew they were that concerned about him? Even more so is God concerned about us. He wants to help us and to be with us, if we will but let him. This is true, if we ~~can~~ can believe Christ and a host of subsequent christians. When your work is such that you need not be ashamed of it, then you can know God's presence without fear. When your work is such that you know that it is doing good for others and for God you can experience with pleasure God's presence.

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3. When you try to name some type of work in which we should very definitely feel that a man is working with God you perhaps think of the ministry, of of missions. This is as it should be, that these professions are to be entered only with a sense of God's call and nearness. However, believe me, there are many aspects of even these jobs which seem anything but God-dominated. So often the organizational efficiency of a church seems to get in the way of the operation of the spirit of God within that church. We often tend to make following the denominational system and way of doing things the criteria of our success, as ministers or as church members. The minister is, among other things, an executive, the man caught at the center of the vortex of activities and organizations. He often finds himself so caught up in all this that he spends little time for the nourishment and development of his own spirit; so that he who would feed others is himself hungry, spiritually. Not only is he unaware of many of his own shortcomings, but he sees them in so many of the laymen of

the church, too. A minister may find himself thinking that the real reason Mr. Jones or Mrs. Smith is so active and loyal in the whirl of church life is because he or she thereby finds praise and attention and position which she or he seldom gets elsewhere. Or maybe Mrs. Smith has a deep-seated need to be excessively appreciated and needed. Maybe Mr. Jones finds in the church functions a place to exert power and influence, which he can't do in his job. Maybe Mrs. Brown is active in the circle because she has a chance there to pick up the latest gossip. (Please understand that these names are fictitious, but the illustrations are frequently all too often the truth). The minister can become disillusioned and apart from God quickly if he lets his suspicions along such lines go too far and affect his relationships with these people. If, on the other hand, he can be a christian realist, he can recognize such elements in people, and yet still love them and try to help and serve them, because he knows God is with him in so doing.

4. Other professions- which are certainly enriched when the practitioner is a ~~xxxxxx~~ christian, aware of God, include medicine, teaching and social service. I can't imagine doctors with a strong sense of christian responsibility striking and refusing to treat patients in need simply because their own welfare seems threatened;- but this happened in Saskatchewan recently. Social service workers who when working with unfortunate people administer the letter of the law but miss the personal, human, ~~xxxx~~ love-centered aspects of a case are often more hated than loved by those whom society pays them to serve. Teachers who teach mainly for money, or who see in their daily duties only hours of torture as they discipline and drill knowledge into seemingly-rebellious young minds, miss the joy of love and respect and satisfaction which dedicated, other-centered teaching can bring. All of these are professions of profound significance, especially when the doctor, welfare worker, or teacher thinks of himself as an agent of the

everpresent God.

5q The common laborer, the store clerk, the mechanic, the engineer, the farmer, the miner; all these and many more are people who can conceive of their work as service occupations for the good of others. They can be like the great apostle Paul who in his tent-making job found numerous ways to serve his Lord. Without such a sense of need, service and direction a job can become deadly monotonous. The mission board of our church and of other great churches, today extends the call for service both at home and abroad to people of many ordinary occupations and skills, because they have found that such dedicated christian workers pack one wallop of a christian message.

6. If you know that your work is of a basic nature not to harm but to help others, then you can feel that God is with you as you do it.

Conclusion:

1. We have observed that Jesus was aware of God, and knew God's

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 the call for service does to
 and to the people of a world that
 occupations and skills, because they
 have found in a good education
 that a writer is an one who is
 called to serve.

So if you know what your work
 is in the world and how to do it
 to help others, that is a good
 thing to do with you as you go.

Conclusion

There is a message in Jesus
 a message of God, and how God's

presence as he went about doing good.

2. We have reasoned that a christian knows that his work should be such that he can feel that ~~Y~~God is with him.

3. We can conclude with logic and with sincerity that just as the good that Jesus did and does is because God was with him, so is our best work done when we can feel sincerely that we are working with God.

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Help us, O God, to be unashamed of our daily work. In fact, help us to be proud of it because we see in it a chance of serving thee through others. In all that we do let us be aware of thy presence and approval.

In Jesus name. Amen.

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in the chance of serving those
through whose hands, in all the world,
let us be aware of the presence and
purpose.

In testimony, Amen.