(Read again 9-22-93. NOT TO BE)

Theme: The right approach to labor.

Proposition: The Christian approach to labor is most satisfactory.

Date Written: September 1, 1946

Sources : King James Bible
Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 5th. Ed.

Places preached: Salem & Epworth 9/1/46
Huntington, and 9/5/48
Kemmerer, Wyo., Sept. 4, 1949, A.M.
Evanston, Wyo., Community music festival, 6 p.m., sept. 4, '49.

Introduction:

1. A young man sat on the edge of the bunk of a friend of his aboard a cattle ship, which had delivered its load and was awaiting orders to return to America, and boasted of the type of labor he had performed as a "cattleman." He said, with a laugh, "I fed forty horses with one half a bale of hay. I watered the horses once a day. When I was supposed to be on watch I went to sleep or played cards. But I got paid for it, even though I did get blacklisted and have to sail on ships now as a member of the regular crew."

2. Another young man worked hard all day at his job of mechanic in a garage in his home town. He did good, dependable work, taking his time on each job and doing it well. He seemed genuinely concerned about each piece of work he turned out. Yet, he was not slow but seemed to turn out as much work as others in the same shop that were not seemingly much concerned about the type of work they produced. Then, when quitting time came, this young man went home and went to work on his brother's motor-bike, or on his family's car or his own, or repaired the family washing machine. He was doing mechanical work, obviously because he loved to do it. His interest was in his labor.

3. Another young man was trained as a carpenter. As he grew into maturity he became aware that he had certain definite gifts and talents,

a sense of a message, that made it impossible for him to do anything but deliver that message to others. He began walking about the countryside in which he lived preaching a new, soft (seemingly), gospel of love. Soon he found this was really his life's work, but that it was a work much more demanding on him than the work of a carpenter. As he worked he found a need for a physician was widespread among his people. With the discovery came the greater discovery that he had power to heal many physical disabilities.

However, this young man wasn't content to do his work alone. So much did he love his work, so little was he jealous of what others might do in his chosen field of labor, that he drew a nucleus of 12 workers around him that he might teach them the fundamentals of his work.

Yet, this was not enough. As he looked upon the people of his country, he said to the nucleus of workers he was training, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."

4. <u>These three illustrations point out the ways in which people can approach their work. The last illustration shows the best and Christian way of looking upon labor.</u>

I. <u>Work may be looked upon simply as a producer of wealth or income</u>.

1. This is the usual modern everyday approach.

a. The dictionary definition of the word "labor" that applies here is "the service rendered or part played by the laborer, operative and artisan in the production of wealth, as distinguished from the service rendered by capitalists or by those whose exertion is primarily and almost entirely mental."

b. This definition is the one that seems to serve as the basis in most labor disputes today. Neither capital nor labor looks upon its task as a chance to serve others with honest mental or physical toil. Rather, each seems more concerned with how much wealth it can secure from its efforts. Profits and wages are the terms we hear, not service and public welfare.

c. The average young man going into a new job or business figures pretty closely how much he can make, while he isn't usually too concerned with whether or not he can do the job well.

2. <u>This approach is not a good one</u>.

a. The young man who fed the 40 horses with 1/2 bale of hay found that out when he was "blacklisted" so he couldn't sail again as a "sea-going cowboy."

b. In the picture now showing around the coutry called "Three Wise Fools," the same lesson is brought out. These three old men who had dedicated their lives to making either money or a reputation, or both, found in their old age that they were neither respected nor honored by their fellowmen. They did not enjoy life. When, through the

c. The attitude of "get all I can,"

"make my pile now," etc., is responsible for short weights in business transactions, for high rates of interest that destroy all financial resources of thrifty people, for loafing on the job that a job may last longer, and for other practices that are usually looked upon as dishonest and disreputable.

3. This attitude is not Christian. Laboring for material things is wrong, if simply acquisition of those things is the goal. This is pointed out in John 6:27 in these words of Jesus: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

II. Work, or labor, may be looked upon as something that one loves to do and can do by which to earn the necessities for physical life, but as something that must be done well.

1. This is the approach to labor that men admire and desire.

a. The young man in the garage that labors well and with interest is admired by his fellows, is in demand by the patrons of the shop.

b. When one has anything to be done that requires the services of others, the question is "Where can I find someone who does good work?"

2. This is a good approach to labor.

a. It makes the work interesting and pleasant.

b. It brings the admiration and respect of ones fellows, as we have seen.

c. It produces income rapidly without ~~xxx~~ accompanying dislike from ones fellowmen and without the approach that this is boredom which must be endured to get the money.

3. Still, this is not a Christian approach to labor.

a. It is Christian as far as it goes, for diligence, sincere interest in ones work and honesty are certainly Christian virtues.

b. One may be interested, in, and may give honest time to, making whiskey, but this can hardly be said to be Christian labor, when one takes into consideration the harm that liquor does to those who use it.

c. The Christian approach to labor has something more in view than just interest in the work.

III. Work or labor may be approacned as a service to others that helps bring them closer to the Kingdom of God.

1. Helping produce material things which better people's condition so that they may have more opportunity to ponder on the things of God is a Christian type of labor, if the worker things of his labor as being that.

a. Illustration: A man currently engaged in helping transport livestock to starving peoples in Europe was asked why in the world he let himself stay on in such a job when he could

make a whole lot more in other capacities. He replied that he did it because he considered it his Christian duty to do this in order to help save human life that the saved ones might get to know Christ. He was sincere as best as those who heard could judge.

b. Similarly, farmers in the present day may look upon their work as God-given opportunity to produce food for starving peoples that these peoples may have a new chance to appreciate Christ. However, a farmer cannot honestly claim to be looking at his work this way if he simply tries to sell on the highest market. He should try to guide his products into channels where they will meet human need by using his influence on legislative and administrative representatives in government, and by trying to be sure he sells to a source that will channel his product into relief channels.

c. Laborers engaged in machinery production, clothing manufacturing, etc., may approach their work similarly.

d. Such an approach can be motivated only by a true love of neighbor, such as Christ taught; a type that makes even love of enemy -- the German, Japanese or perhaps Russian-- be shown through helpful material activitiy.

e. Christ himself set the example for such an approach to labor in his healing. Many times he tried to get rest, but recognizing human need for healing, he healed. Always, though, his healing resulted in faith in himself and God. <u>His labor went beyon the line of duty</u>.

Conclusion:

2. Such an approach to labor gives a reason for one's labor.

a. That reason is to bring others into the Kingdom of God.

Conslusion:

The best and Christian way of looking upon labor is to look upon it as a way to bring others nearer the Kingdom of God.

1. Working merely for what one gets out of labor is not satisfactory.

2. Working simply because one likes the work is good but still provides no purpose that is lasting for the work.

3. Working to bring others closer to the Kingdom brings a realization of the meaning of Christ's words "the harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are few," and makes becoming one of those laborers a task of consecration in the life of each laborer.

May Labor Day, then, become a day not of riotious revelry but a day of rest and reconsecration to the task of Christian labor.