

Hope for Work

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 April 2019

Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Blake. Good morning, One Harbor. How are you? Good? Man, thanks for being here. It was a great morning of worship, just like felt so victorious and just reminded of the resurrection.

Again, if you're new, welcome. I'm glad you're here with us. And even if you've been here for a long time, you know what? We're glad you're here too. Thanks for coming back. You know, we don't want to take you for granted. If you're listening to this later in the week online, well, many of us have good reasons for not being able to make it on Sunday. But thanks for listening online, keeping up with us. What we're doing is we're using Easter to launch into a new series called Because He Lives. It's looking at the implications of our lives, various aspects of our lives, because of the reality of the resurrection. So what does the resurrection mean for us? I mean, we talked about it on Easter. The resurrection isn't just the thing we're waiting for one day.

The resurrection life is what we live in today, tomorrow, and we're going to live in forevermore. And so we're going to look at that. Particularly today, we're going to talk about how it affects our work. So 1 Corinthians 15, 56 to 57 reminds us, the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Resurrection is victory through Jesus. Not through me, not through you. You and I, we have no boast in this. We have no power in this. We have no contribution to making this victory happen. No, me and you, what we do is through faith. We live by faith in Jesus's victory. And so let's tease this idea of victory out a little bit more. What happens when we hear that our side is victorious? Those of you who like the Carolina Hurricanes, you're probably privy to this information. But last week, they were playing game seven as a winner-take-all game for them against the Capitals, and they won in the second overtime, right? And that was, yeah. Thank you, all five of you who are like Hurricanes, man. That's amazing. That's amazing, yeah. Anybody that keeps up with hockey, it's, yeah, so miracles do happen.

You see it right here in the response. And so that was good news. I remember going to bed that night, and my son was like, hey, Dad, what's the score? It's like, it's 3-1. It's the second period. You can pretty much write it off. They're not making it in the next round. Then I woke up to this good news that the Capitals lost, the Hurricanes had actually defeated them. Now, that's great news, but it doesn't mean the Hurricanes have won the Stanley Cup, right? That final victory hasn't happened yet. But what if you could be assured that they would win, right? What if you were a Carolina Hurricanes player and saw into the future, and it's, the headline was the Canes win, the Canes win the Stanley Cup? Well, that would bring about, it should bring about a pretty big change in you, right? It should bring a new confidence to every game you face off against an adversary, right? It's not a reason to excuse yourself from going to play, going to do battle with another team. You're a part of a team. You still got to get out. You still got to play each game, and each game you're going to have an opponent that wants to beat you down. Literally, in hockey, they want to beat you down, right? You still have to get out there. You still have to play hard, even though you know that the victory is in hand. You know that your opponent is going to check you into the boards. You might get a puck to the face. The point is, there's going to be bruises and scars along the way to this assured victory. But the thing is, because of that assurance, in those hard moments, man, we don't lose hope. In those hard moments, we don't give up because we know. We know the outcome. And that is what it is like to live in the resurrection life as Christians. We know. We are assured of this victory. Jesus won the Stanley Cup already for us. We know what's going to happen. We know what it says at the end, right? And Jesus says to us, man, in light of that reality, go and make disciples. Get on the ice. Play good hockey. Play hard. Don't make an excuse to not do anything. So whether you're a veteran Christian or a rookie Christian, it's a pretty awesome thing to know that you've been signed on to the winning team, right? If you're here and you're not on Jesus' team, man, we trust that he's calling you to be on his team. Man, today, he can call you. Salvation is saying, you know what? I'm switching teams. I'm not going to be a God adversary anymore. I'm going to give up my right to that. I'm going to be on Jesus' team. I'm going to put on his jersey and play for him. So what is all of this? The point is, is that being on Jesus' team isn't about riding the bench. We don't put on the pads and the uniforms to just look the part, praying the whole time as man, coach, don't put me on the ice. I don't want to get in there, right? Man, it's, we put on the pads. We put on the uniform. We're like, yes, we want to get in there. We want to participate.

We want to be a part of this. It's 1 Corinthians 15, 58 picks up on this. It says, therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. See, the resurrection, what it does, it brings us back into God's work. It brings us back into God's work. That's good news.

[5 : 14] And I'm not saying that you need to go tomorrow to your job and give your two weeks notice because God has a job with a paycheck waiting for you. That's not what this is about, right? God isn't posting on ZipRecruiter. But make no mistake, the Christian life is being drafted into the work Jesus is doing in the world. See, the great commission, what he's called us to do isn't a great suggestion. We're called to go and make disciples. That's what Jesus gave to do. He says, man, all authority and power has been given to me. Therefore, because that's happened, we can go and we're called to go and we're called to make disciples. And this isn't like a 40-hour-per-week job. Working with God is a little bit different to this idea that we might have of work, right?

For many of us, work or going to school is this compartmentalized part of our life. We put in the hours, then we go home. We leave work at the office. We leave the schoolwork at school. It would be weird if we tried to do those roles, like our dad role, like bring that to the office, right? I'm going to play dad at the office or even reverse that, try to do our occupational role at home, right? The kids don't need a used car salesman. They need a parent. So we leave work at work. And when we get home, we pick up a new type of work. We pick up a different type of work, you know? We, our spouses or parents or children or roommates or friends, we step out of one compartmentalized role of our life. And we step into a new one. But when we step into the new life and the resurrection, we are stepping into work for God and with God. And this work isn't compartmentalized, right? It's not just relegated to 15 hours in the morning and then maybe an hour or two on Sundays.

No, God's work, it's meant to encompass our whole lives. Let me explain it this way. There's this idea of, like, you have, you know, the work I do over here, all these different roles in my life over here, and then my God work over here, and they're separated, right? Compartmentalized. But actually, how it works, it looks more like this slide right here. So we have this thing called primary calling, right? It's following Jesus. God calls us into following him. That's our calling first and foremost when we're saved by Jesus. We're put into this primary calling. And this primary calling is to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus, and to be disciple makers, going and making disciples. This is at the center of who we are, right? That's the very thing, who we are. It flows out of us into everything else we do. And all those other things that we're talking about, those are our secondary callings, right? These specific callings that we're called into. It's the different roles that we play in our lives as people, whether it's an employer, a boss, or a student, or a spouse, or a parent, whatever it may be, those different areas of our life, those different arenas, they aren't leading us, and they're not the primary thing that we do. No, the primary thing that we do is as disciples of Jesus, and that infiltrates and affects everything else. So how does this practically work itself out?

How do we simultaneously work for God and do the other roles of our life? Well, the primary calling for every Christian is to live to the glory of God, right? That's what we're called to do. It isn't something that gets compartmentalized and waits until Sunday. It's every day. It's all day.

It's what we mean when in our values we talk about living this life of worship. Man, that is like who we are. It's not just a thing we do every once in a while. It's meant to be at the heart of everything we do in every arena of our life, living for the glory of God. And when we do that in this way, every part of my life, every part of your life isn't just work. It actually becomes God work.

[9 : 06] And this is quite counterculture because people don't work to the glory of God. We don't just like naturally wake up every day. You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to do everything today to the glory of God, right? Here's some ways that we kind of, this is our natural default settings, one of these two things. Some of us work to live, right? Your work serves no greater purpose than to pay the bills and to put food on the table. You work to live. But then there's other of us, others of us, some of us live to work. Man, your work actually defines who you are. It's one of the, you know, this is probably really popular because it's one of the ways we really self-identify. It's one of the first questions we like to ask people when we meet them. Hey, what do you do? It helps us understand and build a concept of who that person is. And yet the reality is the more important that our job is, the more significant that we think we are. But when we work to the glory of God, it changes this idea of work entirely.

It changes what we work for. It restores a higher view of work. It's not just getting a paycheck, right? But it's also not my identity. My identity isn't wrapped up in what I do. And not only does it restore a higher view of our work, it restores a higher value to our work. Again, let's look at that passage in verse 58 of 1 Corinthians 15. It says, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. See, God's work, God's work brings meaning and significance that never fades. Now that's a bold statement. Because apart from God, what it's saying here, apart from God, our labors are in vain. And that word vain means empty, devoid of meaning or of purpose. That's a tough thing to think about, right? You think about all the stuff that we do, all the labor that we put into our jobs. It's saying here, you know what? Apart from God, it's really just empty and meaningless work. And here's the thing, guys. Think about this. Think about this. As you and I move closer to death, I know, not a popular subject, but let's just bear with me. I'm going somewhere with this. As you and I move closer to death, the reality is it doesn't matter. The poor and the wealthy are both dogged by this sense of how meaningless life can be. I can remember starting out in the workforce at the young age of 16. I had these big, bold plans to make a name for myself.

I was going to make my mark on the world. I was going to amass profile and possession. I wanted big checks, a big house, a big family, all that. But the more of my dreams that I achieved, man, the emptier and more meaningless it all felt. I never found the significance I was looking for.

I was trying to validate my existence, my life, through what I did and what I accomplished and what I achieved. Ecclesiastes 2, 22 to 23. If you ever want to like a reality check, like a really cold slap in the face, read Ecclesiastes, all right? It's like hard to read, but it is so good.

It says this, the preacher says this, what has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? A lot of us are going, wow, that really describes my work.

[12 : 29] When I wake up every day, it's a striving, it's a toil. For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. It's an old-school word. An old-school word for it is like he's not happy with his work. His work's bumming him out, right? Even in the night, his heart does not rest.

This also is vanity. It's meaningless. It's empty. See, what I was doing, I was searching for meaning and significance, and it was rooted in what I did. I used to work to pursue my own glory. That's what my life was about, but in the pursuit of that, in the pursuit of more glory for myself, in the pursuit of more, I always seemed to be losing more than I was getting. That's what I was experiencing. I was losing peace. I was losing health. I was losing relationships. I was losing joy. All the while, my career, my salary, and my possessions were getting better and better. That's what the trade-off, that's what was happening. See, I thought my work could give me all that I could ever want.

I thought it could give me all that I could ever want. I thought I could add value to my life. I thought it could validate my existence. I thought it could give me meaning and make my life count, but in the end, it proved to take more than it gave. And like the preacher of Ecclesiastes says, my days were full of sorrow. My work wasn't a joy. It wasn't a vexation. It was a toil.

See, all the work we do as parents, as students, as employees, or bosses, when we look to them to find meaning and significance, we end up feeling empty. We end up realizing that they're actually empty.

And then at the end of our life, what does all that work count for? We leave our legacy. We have to. We have to leave all that we did, all that we amassed. We have to actually leave it in the hands of others, not knowing what they're going to do with it.

[14 : 28] Everything that we built or created, the fortune we amassed, we have to entrust it to them. And everything that I've read about the rich and the wealthy, they, as the closer they move to death, the more anxiety and stress and unhappy they are in the reality of this. It brings anxiety, man, and hopelessness. And that's to the rich and the poor alike. Let me give you an example of how this works out. Lehman Brothers, we're all pretty familiar with that name still, right? Great investment bankers, 150 years in their heritage. By 2008, they were the eighth wealthiest investment banker firm in the world.

A couple of immigrants from 1850 started that out, slapped their names on it. Two brothers, last name Lehman, slapped their names on it. Man, it seems like this thing was going to last forever, that their names were going to live on in perpetuity, that people were going to know because of what they had built. But now, it's gone. Lehman Brothers is no more. And in a generation, it's not even going to, it's not going to be remembered more than an anecdotal story of failure.

And in a few generations, they're going to be totally forgotten. You and I can walk through a graveyard and look at all the forgotten legacies. You're like, Jess, you're a real bummer this morning, right?

But this is reality, guys. We walk through a graveyard, we can look at all the forgotten legacies, people's names on grave markers, whose mark on the world has vanished like a vapor.

Everything that we build for this life is going to pass away, and it is going to be forgotten. But here's the hope that we have. We're getting to that now. There's a graveyard with a tomb that is empty.

[16 : 27] And the legacy of that man's empty tomb will never end and never fade. And to be pulled into that is to abide in unfading meaning and significance, because God's work carries on into eternity.

When we work for him, it changes the game. All the things that we do, they're not going to pass away with this world. We're not going to pass away into meaningless vapor. It isn't vanity.

1 Corinthians 3, verse 12 says, If anyone builds on the foundation, talking about the gospel of Jesus Christ, if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest.

For the day, that day means the day Jesus comes back to judge the living and the dead, that day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. Let me say that again. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

[17 : 42] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. What is this talking about? Well, it's saying God's work yields eternal reward.

I don't know about you, but I work to obtain a reward, right? Like, I do this pastoring job. I love it, and it's a calling, but I ain't doing it for free, right?

I'm getting a paycheck. Have you heard a saying? Maybe you've heard this saying. I don't need the work, I just need the money. Y'all heard that?

The point is, we don't work for free, right? We don't show up at a job. We don't put in the toilet. We don't work hard for nothing, right? Jerry Maguire, show me the money. Why do we want money?

Why do we want that? What's our motivation for those things? Oh, man, it's to buy stuff, right? I mean, pay the bills, but we're hoping that we could buy fancy clothes, or just clothes, or cars, or boats, and homes, all these things.

[18 : 43] These are the rewards that we're looking for to offset the suffering toil of our work. Let me just say, we must be suffering a lot, because we can't stop rewarding ourselves, right? But that is the hope for life.

That's all there is if there's no resurrection, right? You've got to just pursue all that stuff and get more and more and more, more pleasure, more fun, more stuff. But here's the thing. At the end, we don't get to take it with us, right?

Hertz doesn't have a trailer hitch for a reason. Here's the choice you and I have. We can live for today, and we can live for the temporary rewards for today that are going to pass away, or we can live for that day.

That day when our works are going to be tested. Now, it's easy to see how we can live for today. It comes natural to us, right? The ancient Epicureans were the first to believe there wasn't life after death.

Modernity isn't as original as we think it is, right? It's just a rehash of an ancient way of thinking. So what did the Epicureans do? Their life's purpose, their modus operandi for life was this, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die, right?

[19 : 54] Basically, live it up every day. Don't delay any gratification, because tomorrow may not come. And if tomorrow doesn't come, man, you'll have missed out.

That's all there is. And it's easy to see the work an Epicureanist must do. But what about a resurrectionist? What does our work look like?

How do we practically go about doing God's work that is going to last into eternity? I spent a lot of time this week thinking about this, actually. I've wrestled through answering this question.

And initially what came to mind was this. Man, the work, God's work, man, it's prayer work. It's proclamation work. It's people work. And that's true. That is a work that God calls us into.

And that is stuff that we can bring with us into every role of our life. But, man, something wouldn't let me just leave it there. The Holy Spirit didn't give me any peace of just leaving it at that. And here's the thing.

[20 : 51] We have to be cautious here. Because what can happen is that I can proclaim something. I can call you into an idealistic version of discipleship and living this resurrection life that is impossible to live up to.

Is prayer work a part of God's work? Sure. But then you could easily get into a debate of how much. How much prayer work is necessary? And how often?

And how long? Do I have to pray at work to make it God's work? How often do I have to pray at work to make it God's work? Is sharing the gospel, that proclamation work, is that God's work?

Absolutely. Does that mean I have to get up in the cafeteria at school and start preaching the gospel to everybody? Does that make my being a student God's work?

See, God doesn't call us to results. He calls us to obedience. We're good at complicating God's work. Right? We like to take it, these things that we're called into, and we want to put numbers on it and stats on it and make it a checklist.

[22 : 00] And here's the thing, guys. When we start doing that, when we start debating in that way, like how much, how many times, how often, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, man, that just leads to pride or despair. Because what we're doing, we're creating these things of, oh, how can I measure up?

And if I can measure up, then I'm full of pride. Look what I accomplish. Or if I don't measure up, I fall into despair. Oh, I just can't do it. But what I think God is calling us to, and he wants us to point out is seeing how actually simple it is to do God's work.

And it's more like this. God's work flows out of those who abide in him. So the center of our lives, the center of who we are, primary calling, the primary thing that we start out with isn't running into doing, doing, doing.

Man, it's enjoying God. It's being in his presence. It's being changed by him. It's abiding work. Because, man, when he comes in, and he starts to transform us, and he starts to change us, then all that bubbles up and overflows out of us.

We talked about that thing of abounding in the work of the Lord. First, the work of the Lord has to abound in us. That word abound is this picture, think of a picture of a cup being filled to overflowing and constant overflowing.

[23 : 22] It can't hold in all that's being poured into it. And when we do abiding work, man, the steadfast, perfect, unending, unchanging love of God, he's the fountain of all this stuff, just continues to pour into us and pour into us and pour into us.

Right? And then it spills out of us, naturally. That is the power of the resurrection at work in us. Verse 58 of 1 Corinthians, again, it says, man, therefore, in light of what God has done, in light of his resurrection, be steadfast in it.

Be immovable in it. Live in it. Dwell in it. Abide in it. Knowing that in the Lord, right? Not apart from the Lord, in the Lord, your labor's not in vain.

Man, abiding in God, being in him. That's what it is all about. That's the primary call we're called to do. If we reverse that and we don't make that the center of who we are, guys, it's not going to be good.

We're going to become moralist. We're going to become legalist. We're going to become religious. But, man, when we step into that, when we live in that place of abiding, when we do the abiding work, the resurrection life, we are experiencing that resurrection life over and over and over again.

[24 : 45] That's what we need to be doing. We're becoming more and more like Jesus in that abiding work. We die more to ourselves. We live more to God.

And this doesn't mean that we lose who we are. Actually, the more you and I abide in God, the more you and I are transformed into the likeness of Jesus, we become the most authentic version of ourselves.

God's bringing us back to the most authentic, real, whole version of who we were created to be. But that was lost because of sin. Again, before we can abound in the Lord's work, his work has to abound in us.

And we can be steadfast to do his work because abiding work is the only work we do that gives us abundantly more than it demands. When you do the abiding work, it is the only work that is restorative.

It's the only work that is refreshing. It is the only work that you walk away feeling more energized rather than less energized, right? When we are so saturated by the Lord's work in us, it overflows to every part of our lives.

[25 : 53] Then we can't compartmentalize. It's impossible. Even if we try to, we can't compartmentalize it. Because what happens when you're abiding with God and doing that and then going out from there, God's work goes from what we do to who we are.

When we're so saturated in the love and the power of God, when we're so saturated in him and changed by him, it changes everything, right?

Going out and doing work isn't what we do. It's doing work for God isn't what we do. It's who we are. The prayer work, the proclamation work, the people work that we were talking about, it doesn't become another checklist of our life.

These things just become the natural rhythm of our life. It becomes the natural rhythm of who we are because of what God is doing in us. So homework for this week for those of you in community groups.

These three questions. Man, just think about this for yourself. Talk about it with friends and spouses, whoever it may be, before you get to community group. What are you working for? What would be your legacy if you died today?

[27 : 02] And practice leading into your day this week with abiding work. Practice leading into that. That could be Bible or praise or prayer or all three. Man, practice doing that.

And experience what it feels like, how that changes your day and sets you up for a day of going in and letting your work be transformed into God's work. And then come ready to share your experience at community group.

And in all of this, we got to remember that abiding is a gift of God's grace. We get to do that because he's a good, gracious God.

We didn't earn the right to abide, you and I. Jesus earned it for us. He did the work for us by his death and by his resurrection. And I want to say this to you if you're here and you're not a Christian, man, put your hope in Jesus today.

Put your hope in his cross, put your hope in his death and resurrection. Stop trying to work for meaning and significance in your life. You don't have to work to validate your existence.

[28 : 01] Man, come to the one where you can find ultimate meaning, ultimate significance. He is going to change and transform you into the most authentic whole person that you are.

He came to die for your sins. He came to do the work that you couldn't do. Put your faith in him today. And if you're here and you're not a Christian, call the band to come up.

If you're here and you're a Christian, man, what we get to do now is we get to respond with thankfulness to God's grace. This is the posture of our hearts as God invites us to the communion table.

Man, we remember as we come to the communion table, and they're located in various places around the room. We're reminded that his body was broken.

Jesus' body was broken. Jesus' blood was shed. We're reminded of that in his weakness proved to be victory. It was strength and power.

[29 : 03] The strength and power for God's work. And that's found in the cross and the empty tomb. And at the Savior who's seated on the throne, and communion reminds us of that today.

We're reminded that, man, our labor isn't in vain. In him, it is not in vain. It is victory assured. We know we've won the Stanley Cup already.

Right? But we still get out. And we still fight. And we still do it all for the sake of the gospel. Making disciples, pushing back darkness.

Because he's won it for us. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you for the reality of the resurrection, the truth of the resurrection that you call us into, Lord God. The victory is yours.

And we live in that victory. And that victory means everything. It's not a little part we add on to our lives. And it permeates every part of our life.

[30 : 09] Even our work, Lord God. I pray this week as we practice some of these things. As we lead into our day with abiding work. That, man, we would start to see a renewed joy.

A renewed purpose and significance to the work that we do. Whether it's in jobs that give us a paycheck. Or students going to school. Whatever it may be.

That we do to your glory, God. We would do for your sake. We would do knowing that, man, we are called to bear witness to you, Jesus Christ.

And we get to do that in just a natural way, Lord God. That you're with us, Holy Spirit. And bearing witness through our lives and our words and our actions, Lord God.

And so I pray that you would give us that grace today and tomorrow for the rest of the week. That this would be a practice that just becomes a regular thing in our lives.

[31 : 06] Living for your glory. Doing your work. Amen.