

Shepherd's Staff

September 2024

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m

Why Does Labor Day Matter to Christians?

Source: <https://www.nifw.org/blog/2018/6/1/why-labor-day-matters-to-christians#:~:text=A%20day%20to%20celebrate%20labor&text=It%20should%20be%20obvious%20to,the%20lost%2C%20and%20the%20last.>

Author: Russell Gehrlein

Someone who knows my passion for the theology of work recently asked me an excellent question - "What makes Labor Day significant for Christians?"

Let me provide a brief backdrop of the history and meaning of this holiday, and then illustrate why Christians should wholeheartedly celebrate this holiday.

A DAY TO CELEBRATE LABOR

I did a little research to find out why we celebrate Labor Day in the U.S. on the first Monday in September. Wikipedia states that the holiday "honors the American labor movement and the contributions that workers have made to the strength, prosperity, laws and well-being of the country."



Reading further, I am reminded that during the trade union movement in the late 1800s, it was suggested that there be a holiday to celebrate the laborer. Shortly thereafter, in 1887, it is reported that the first state to make it a public holiday was Oregon. Over the next seven years, thirty states had begun to celebrate Labor Day, and it was deemed a federal holiday in 1894.

Certainly, Christ-followers should celebrate the many social reforms that came out of the labor movement, which resulted in establishing child labor laws, guaranteeing more livable wages and safer working conditions for all. It should be obvious to the Christian that this movement was biblically appropriate, considering the Lord's concern for the least, the lost, and the last. Solomon observes in Proverbs 29:7 that the righteous care about justice for the poor. This implies that Christians should speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, defending the rights of the poor and needy. (See also Proverbs 31:8-9)

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WORK MATTERS BECAUSE IT MATTERS TO GOD

There are hundreds of Bible verses that address some aspect of work.

In Genesis, we see in the creation story that depicts God as a worker. He calls humans to work with Him to expand His handiwork. We also see the downside of work, where Adam's sin brought a curse on work, making

it unnecessarily difficult and resulting in sweat, unfruitfulness, and disharmony among workers. In the Old Testament (OT) narratives, we read about well-known men and women who successfully integrated their faith in God at work—Moses, Joseph, Ruth, David, and Nehemiah. We also read about ordinary people such as Bezalel and Oholiab, who were called and gifted to work with God in the construction of the tabernacle. We find principles on how we should work from the OT writings (Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes). The prophets give us some insights about the future of human work in the new creation.



In the New Testament, we read what Jesus taught about work in the Gospels, as well as what Paul and others wrote in their epistles. We see how Jesus redeems and transforms workers. Finally, the book of Revelation has some things to teach us about the eternal value of our work.

WORK MATTERS BECAUSE GOD UPHOLDS HIS CREATION AND BRINGS SHALOM THROUGH OUR WORK

Our Creator sustains His creation mostly through human labor.

God created us as His coworkers with various talents so that He could meet all of the complex physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs of people. God loves people through human work. Tim Keller confirms this in his book, *Every Good Endeavor*. He reminds us, “God’s loving care comes to us largely through the labor of others. Work is a major instrument of God’s providence; it is how he sustains the human world.”

Isaiah 28:23-29 supports this concept well. The prophet describes how a farmer does the work of God as His coworker. God provides the wisdom needed and instructs the farmer how to do the work the right way to cultivate the field, gather the harvest, and process the grain so that His people can eat. He emphasizes that all of this ultimately comes from God.

Lee Hardy, in his book, *The Fabric of This World*, presents Luther’s view. “Through the human pursuit of vocations across the array of earthly stations the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the sick are healed, the ignorant are enlightened, and the weak are protected ... In the activity of work, God is present as the one who provides us with all that we need.”

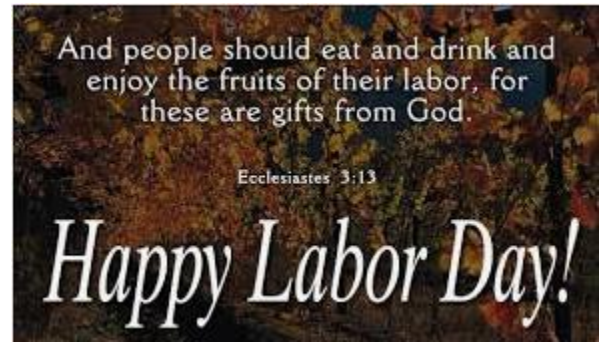
The end result of all of this hard work that God orchestrates is a world where shalom increases.

WORK MATTERS BECAUSE THROUGH IT GOD BRINGS BLESSINGS TO HIS PEOPLE

Doug Sherman and William Hendricks in *Your Work Matters to God* have observed several things that the Bible teaches. Through work God meets the needs of people who are of eternal value to Him (Psalm 104:10-31). Through work God meets our needs and our family’s needs (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). Through work God provides extra money so that we can give some of it to those in need (Ephesians 4:28). Through work we love God and neighbors by serving them both (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40).

In addition, God’s blessings take a variety of forms. Sherman and Hendricks wisely indicate some of the byproducts of work. “People need work. They need its challenge, its product, its achievement, its aesthetic and emotional rewards, its relational dynamics, its drama, its routine, and its remuneration.” This idea is supported with our understanding of the creation mandate in Genesis 1:28. There, we read that Adam was created to be a worker, or rather a co-worker with God. We were also created by God for a purpose. Each of us were given the appropriate gifts, skills, abilities, and desires to be able to perform various functions through our jobs.

Believe it or not, Christians who live “under the Son” rather than merely “under the sun” can find some measure of satisfaction in our work. Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 states that man should “be happy and do good while they live ... eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil – this is the gift of God.” It is indeed possible in the Lord to find joy and contentment in our work.

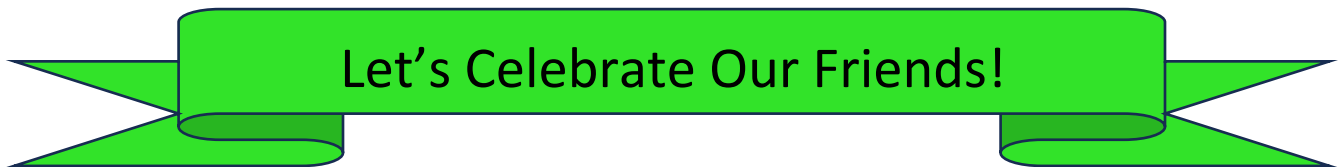


It was stated earlier that we love God through work. Sherman and Hendricks explain how work relates to loving God (Deuteronomy 6:5). “Just think about how much of your heart, soul, and might go into your work. Imagine, then, as you spend yourself at that task, being able to say, ‘I’m here to do something God wants done, and I intend to do it because I love Him.’ The person who can make this statement has turned his work into one of his primary means of obeying the greatest of God’s commandments.” Amen!

I want to encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ to celebrate Labor Day with praise to the triune God who is a worker and a new appreciation for His gift of work.



- 9/2 Kellen Reints
- 9/3 Joshua Haan
- 9/7 Deb Prier
- 9/8 Mike Ascher
- 9/9 Mark Kramer
- 9/12 Carol Watters
- 9/15 Savannah Ascher
- 9/16 Laura Edeker
- 9/24 Larry Johnson
- 9/26 Ellie Reints
- 9/26 Kenneth Meester



- 9/7 Marlyn & Marcia Allspach
- 9/13 Mike & Stacy Ascher
- 9/15 Frank & Patricia Pott



Reminder: If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20th of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.

