

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sermon text: John 6:22-35
Date preached: August 5, 2012

Grace to you and peace from God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Why do we work? In adulthood, much of our identity centers on our job. It guides our life schedules for good or bad. Work for some is not enjoyable, but necessary for what we need. Others enjoy their work so much to the exclusion of all else. Some work simply to earn enough money for what we need or even what we perceive to need.

Much of our work is geared toward now. We want the benefits of our work now. With rapid news outlets and the ability of everyone to communicate rapidly through facebook, instant messaging, twitter and so forth, we are very much in a “now” mindset.

That was true even of the Israelites. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron because they were not getting to the Promised Land fast enough. They too wanted things in the now. Alas, God was doing something very important.

What God was doing among the Israelites was work. He was equipping them to work beyond simply the jobs necessary to daily living. Throughout the

journey from slavery into the freedom of living in the Promised Land, the Israelites were doing the work of forming a community. God was at work in them guiding them into a people with a mindset of slavery into a people with a mindset of being able to function as a free people.

The Israelites in the moment didn't see that benefit to their work. Likewise for us, when our work does not appear to have a now benefit, one can easily become discouraged as did many people before us.

Even if we view our work now as a means for later retirement, the focus of such work still remains on us. Therein is our sin. It is all about us. And in the "all about us mindset" comes a very radical statement out of the mouth of Jesus.

"Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you." Of course, the natural question follows and was directed to Jesus. "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"

The answer is summed up in three words. Believe in God. Believe that God sent Jesus Christ into the world to die for you. Believe that Jesus took our arrogant, self-righteous, me first attitude, over

indulgent, prideful, and all our sinfulness upon him. Believe that in its place, Jesus leaves you with his purity, with his gift of abundant life. That is the death and resurrection that is transformative of us both in the life to come and in how we live our lives in the now.

Believe that God does what God desires. Believe that God answers our prayer. And to illustrate that truth let us look at this in the aspect of the work we do in our jobs, in our retirement, in our homes and in all aspects of our life.

When we pray for a job, do we believe God will provide it? We become so intent on ourselves that we fail to see doors that God has opened, or simply reject outright.

Our failure to believe has dire ramifications. Failure to believe leads us to death. Failure to believe in God's ability to do what God wants and desires will lead us into the depths of hell.

We work not for ourselves first. Our work is first and foremost to the glory of God. In this holy work we serve our neighbors in ways they may or may not realize. Such is the holiness of what God calls us to do with the gifts and talents He has equipped us.

The work God gives us is part of our ministry. When you work, when you do your work well, with integrity, honesty and love you are building up the body of Christ, even if there are those who fail to see that result. This is not easy. While the company may say the customer is right, that is not always the case.

Our work is to believe in God. Such work is possible only with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that calls us to live in the body of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that equips us for ministry.

It is the Holy Spirit that binds us together as the body of Christ. For the Spirit leads us to receive the gracious invitation of our Lord. It is an invitation to come and receive in our hands and on our lips the body and blood of Christ, whose work it was to give himself for us and for our salvation.

Such good news cannot be compromised. We are saved by the work of Christ and him alone, for that is what it means as Paul confesses in Ephesians that “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” It is the truth that we speak in love, that again using the words in Ephesians, “we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from

whom the body, joined and held together by every join with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” As the Spirit works in us to build up the body of Christ, so too we are built up and discover the value of the gift of work that our work is out of love for our neighbor and to the glory of God. AMEN.