

"TO EVERY MAN HIS WORK"

Text: Mark 13:34

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Delivered: September 3, 1967

The saintly Andrew Murray has been an inspiration to me. There are two books in my library that I cherish, both by Andrew Murray. One is entitled: "WAITING ON GOD!" The other is entitled "WORKING FOR GOD". How I recommend these books to any believer who wants to be a servant of the Lord, who wants to find his part in God's program which includes an offer "to every man his work."

The parable in Mark 13:34-36 must be seen in the light of the return of our Lord. Christ is unmistakably pictured as a householder who is away on a journey. (v.34). During his absence, the Lord has given to everyone of us his own work to do. (v.35). In order to do the work he has left for us to do, we must combine watching and working. We must realize that the worst "ism" in the world may riot be fascism or communism, but somnambulism. So often we are guilty of spiritual "sleep-walking". While we sleep, we compromise with wrong. While we sleep we neglect our communion with God. While we sleep we neglect our great opportunities for service. Let me say three things by way of introduction to our theme of service for God.

1. Service is God's work.

As Christians, we are invited to share in the greatest opportunity for time and eternity. We are invited to share in the work in which God Himself finds His highest glory. God is engaged in the work of bringing man back to Himself. When a Christian is working with God, he is doing God's own work, and through it we glorify God.

2. God's work must be done in God's way and in God's power.

Working with God, to be effective, must be regarded as spiritual work to be performed by spiritual men. Therefore, such work must be done in the power of God's Spirit. If we fail to see that it is God's work, and that it must be done in God's way and in God's power, we will be failures in God's work.

3. God's work should be carried on by every Christian.

The number of Christians who do practically nothing for our Lord disturbs me. They play no role in the church. They are members of the team, but sit in the bleachers. I am convinced that the evidence of your divine life in God is your love as it is manifested in working to bless men. How else can you demonstrate divine life? Furthermore, I believe that it is God's will for every believer, without exception, to do something for God. You may be an invalid, but still there is something for you to do. You may be paralyzed completely, not able to move hand or foot, but your heart is not paralyzed, and you can still carry on a ministry of intercessory prayer.

So I approach the subject of Christian work with this three fold challenge:

1- It is God's work.

2- It must be done in God's way and by God's power.

3- God's work must be done by every Christian.

As I consider the matter of working with God and for God, let me suggest three things:

THREE PLEAS FOR WORKERS

THREE PRINCIPLES OF WORK

THREE PROMISES TO WORKERS

I-THREE PLEAS FOR WORKERS

1. The Plea of God the Father: WAIT AND WORK.

I like this translation of Isaiah 64:4: "Neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides Thee, which worketh for him that waiteth for Him." Here God is making a two-fold plea, to wait and to work. Waiting on the Lord has the value of making us strong in the work of the Lord. Working for the Lord is the fruit of our waiting on the Lord.

I see Christians who wait upon God but never seem to work for Him. They enjoy the experience of fellowship with God, but they excuse themselves from all work for the Lord. They forget that the very purpose of waiting *upon* God implies surrender to the will of God and a readiness to share in God's work.

On the other hand, I see those who work for God, but apparently know little about waiting on God. Sometimes I fear that in our church program we put people to work without their realizing what a holy thing it is to work for God. We put them to work before they have learned that it is not just a matter of carrying out a program of activity, but that they must lean upon God for strength. I have seen, in my ministry, people enthusiastically taking a job in a church as they sincerely said: "I will do the best that I can." And they try to carry on the work with only human strength, not realizing that God's work can only be done effectively in God's strength. If they could only have waited upon God, learning to depend on God, they would not be so easily discouraged.

How we need to learn the rhythm of service, waiting and working. Then we will learn that it is only as God works in me that I can work for Him. He will work more effectively through me if I have learned to wait on Him. I will not be another service "Drop-out" because I made the mistake of thinking that I could work for God without waiting on God.

2. The Plea of our blessed Lord.

Jesus made the plea when he said: "Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5:14,16.

Our Lord pleads with us to be useful. "Let your light shine". A light is meant to be useful. Those in darkness need a light to see.

As followers of Christ, we are to shine into the darkness of the world and give light. Upon our good works others may depend for light, health, and joy.

Our Lord pleads with us to work for the glory of God. The world was made for the glory of God. Man's sin sought to strip away God's glory. Christ can redeem us and to lead us back to glorify God.

Christ pleads with us to let His light shine in our lives. This means that the power of God working in us is the power of Christ. Our light is actually the light of Christ. When His light shines in our work, no matter how humble and feeble it may be, that work will glorify God.

3. The Plea of the Apostle Paul.

I like the plea which is expressed in his words: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:8-10.

This is a plea that we should be not only new creatures but also new creators. Paul makes it very clear that we were created in Christ Jesus for good works. We were not saved by works, but we were saved for works. Works are not the root of our salvation, but the fruit of our salvation. Our works to save our soul are worthless, but the works to after our salvation are infinitely worthwhile.

Paul pleads with us to realize that works could not save us. If works could save us, then there was no need for Christ to die for our redemption. Because our works were sinful, God made us over. He made us new creations. We represent God's workmanship, as we were created in Christ Jesus. But we are new creations that we may have a part in creating good works.

We have been created unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. We have been prepared for the works, and the works have been prepared for us. God prepared a work for Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Peter, and Paul. He has prepared some work for us to do; and if we do not do it, our work will not be done.

II. THREE PRINCIPLES OF WORK

Dr. Andrew Murray once declared his indebtedness to Dr. Edward Thring, who was once one of the most original and striking figures in the educational world of his time in England. There were three root-principles that distinguished his teaching from what was current in his day.

1. "Every boy in school, even the dullest, should have the same attention." Edward Thring criticized the educational institution, which kept up its name by training a number of men for the highest prize, and neglecting the majority. Thring felt this was dishonest, and there could be no truth in an educational system which does not care for all. He felt that every boy had some gift, and everyone was entitled to attention. Every boy, with care and patience, could find a place in life.

What this principle could do for our churches! What do we usually do? We find a gifted person and we work him to death. We saddle him with four jobs while three men go unchallenged!

I am convinced that every Christian has something he can do. He has the right to be taught and helped to find his place. The church is not faithful in its ministry when it neglects even the feeblest worker. If God has given every man a work, we need to help him find that work.

2. The second principle of Edward Thring was: "It is a law of nature, that work is pleasure." He didn't want to make work compulsory but voluntary. He delighted to show boys what value could be gained from work, what pleasure could be derived from work.

This principle is also applicable to the church. We need to unfold before our members the: greatness, the glory, and the gain of Christian work. We need to show them that when they carry out God's will for their lives they will find genuine pleasure in the endeavor. Something is wrong with our approach if the members in our church are working and not enjoying it.

3. The third of Thring's principles of education was that "success is not only possible but it is assured." To him the object of education was not mere knowledge, since not every boy can attain mere knowledge. But to Thring, the object of education was to draw out and cultivate every power in an individual. Under this inspiration many boys found new selves and the world around them took on a new meaning.

We can also apply this principle to the work of serving God. Christian work would be transformed if our people knew that they were working "in the power that worketh in us." As I assure myself that I have something to do in this world, and that I can trust divine energy to help me do it, I know that together we will succeed. The true Christian works as one who knows that God's power is working in him and through him, and out from him to those around him.

III. THREE PROMISES TO WORKERS

We find great promises in the Word of God. Consider three of them:

1. The Promise of greater work.

John 14:12. "And greater works than these shall He do; because I go unto my Father." Our blessed Lord knew that He was going back to the Father and that many disciples would be able to do more things than He did while He was on the earth. At Pentecost three thousand would be added to the church and baptized. Philip at Samaria would see multitudes won to the Lord. Paul and Barnabas would see many won to Christ in missionary outreaching. Think of all the service done by countless followers of Christ down to the day in which we live.

Just think of all the service that has been rendered, and all the victories which have been accomplished since Christ died by those whom He inspired and helped. Think of all the pages of heroism, sacrifice, and gallantry, which have been written by His followers. In his own day, our Lord made only a passing impression on a small area of land, and almost none on the great world outside the Holy Land, but his followers have swept across the earth winning masses to Christ. And every one of them would be the first to admit that it was not they who did the work, but that the inspiration, the power, and the endurance necessary to do great work for Christ came from Jesus Christ.

I take it as a glorious promise that we shall succeed in doing great work for Christ. He went back to the Father, but He continues to work in us and through us. We do not go out alone. "I am with you always" is still true. There is no limit to what we can do, with Christ standing by us, strengthening and sustaining us. It is as if Christ were saying to each of us: "Lean on me, look" to me, and there is no limit to what we can accomplish together."

2. The Promise that we can abound in the work of the Lord.

1 Cor. 15:58. "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as such as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Let us never forget that this tremendous verse follows 57 triumphant verses concerning the greatness and glory of the resurrection life of our Lord and of His people. Indeed, this verse is the practical application of all that has gone before. "WHEREFORE, my beloved brethren..." If we have faith in a risen, living Lord, and if we realize all that His resurrection means to us, the result will be abounding work for our Lord:

Note that everyone who shared the resurrection joy in the New Testament went out to make known the good news. It was so with the disciples. Those who had been cowardly became conquering because of the power of the risen Lord who had appeared to them. It was so with even the women who came to the empty tomb. It is so with every one of us, even to this good day, who respond to the Great Commission. The resurrection of Christ is the power for our work and the pledge of victory in the name of Christ.

Our abounding is "in the work of the Lord." What is the work of the Lord? It is telling others of the Risen Christ. It is the service we render because we know of the new life that Christ has brought to us.

Our abounding work is not an easy work. It was not easy for Christ. It cost him His life to conquer Sin and overcome Satan. It cost him an earthly life to gain the risen life. It will cost us. We will have to experience the life of sacrifice. It is always expensive to keep in close touch with the risen Lord. But thereby we can be steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord.

And what an accompanying promise: "For as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Our work as Christians is often very slow and difficult and unthankful." But whenever I begin to lose heart, I listen to those wonderful words: "YOU KNOW that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." This is the secret of effectual service. As I work in His presence and in His power then all my work is in Him. His strength is in my weakness, and my labor cannot be in vain.

3. The promise that I can be a worker who needs not to be shamed.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth .JI
2 Tim. 2 :15.

This has been a blessed promise to me down through the years. Here I am assured that I can be the kind of a workman that needs not be ashamed. This means that I won't be afraid to let my Lord come and inspect my work. If you are a worker with Christ, you know your work; you give you best to your work and take delight in doing your work well.

Our promise has a great condition: "Handling aright the word of truth. A long time ago I realized that I would not be completely furnished to every good work unless I experienced the power of the Word of God. There carne a day when I settled once and for all that the Scripture is inspired of God, and has the life and the life-giving power of God in it. I determined that in the power of the Holy Spirit I would accept the Spirit-filled Word of God. I knew that the Word of God was given for TEACHING (the revelation of the Mind of God), for REPROOF (the discovery of our sins and shortcomings), for CORRECTION (the removal of what was wrong in my life), to be replaced with what is good, and for INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (the communication of all that I needed to walk before God in His favor).

This great promise helps me to summarize all that I have tried to say in this message. God is working in this world, seeking to win it back to him. God expects every believer to have a vital part in this tremendous task. God does His work by working in us, inspiring and empowering us for the task. He asks that each one of us shall give him a heart and a life, devoted and dedicated in surrender and faith. When this is true, I can be a man of God, complete and thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Every Christian worker should aim at two things: to be completely equipped and to be completely expendable. This requires that I make it a life study to do His work perfectly. This means, simply, that Christ's work must come first in my life.