

## Sermon 14<sup>th</sup> June (Colossians 3:11-4:6) “Does God hate Mondays too”

There is a scene in Doctor who, where Rose Tyler has lost the doctor, and is back home on earth, sitting in a café, talking to her mum and boyfriend. It goes like this:

*Rose: But what do I do every day mum? What do I do? Get up. Catch the bus. Go to work. Come back home, eat chips and go to bed, is that it?*

*Mickey: It's what the rest of us do.*

*Rose: But I can't.*

*Mickey: Why? 'Cause you're better than us?*

*Rose: No! I didn't mean that! It was. . . it was a better life. I don't mean all the travelling, seeing aliens and spaceships and things, that don't matter. The Doctor showed me a better way of living your life. You know, he showed you too. That you don't just give up. You don't let things happen. You make a stand. You say 'no'. You've got to do what's right when everyone else runs away and I just can't!*

Catch the bus. Go to work. Come back home, eat chips and go to bed, is that it?

For many people, life seems quite unexciting, sufficient perhaps, but hardly exciting. It is certainly not what they dreamt of doing.

That's why society is full of people buying lottery tickets and auditioning for the X-factor – dreaming of a way out of the circle of work and chips.

Now, it may be that for you the circle has more variety, more affluence, than chips work and sleep. But it can still feel the same.

The thing is, when we come to church, it doesn't necessarily help.

For here we speak of the disciples changing the world, martyrs turning it upside down with their faith, and missionaries travelling to distant lands for Christ. But for most of us, that's about as likely as a trip in a Tardis. It can excite us for a few minutes, but then we realise that us doing that is just a fantasy.

Indeed, there is often a disconnect between what we hear in church, with the big vision we get there, what it seems to say about life and faith, and on the other hand the reality of our daily living.

A recent survey of 3,000 committed Christians at Spring Harvest found that 47% said that the teaching they received in church was not helping them in their daily lives, and 57% said they'd never heard a sermon on work and the workplace.

That's worrying.

Especially given the arithmetic we looked at the other day.

You are alive for 160 hours a week (most of you).

You are awake for 110 hours a week.

But even the most committed of you is unlikely to spend more than 10 hours in

church activities.

That means you spend 100 hours a week not in church.

So, if Christ is Lord of all, then where is Jesus in your 100 hours?

How do we transform that time in the name of the Kingdom of God?

How do we get God out of Sunday and into Monday morning?

How do we make sure that the Church is not just an oasis where we come to escape the world, for 1 hour out of 110 – when we pretend life *could* be different?

How do we change Church into a springboard, where what we do together empowers us to live the rest of the week in a different way? A Christ-filled way?

We need a Church that equips us for the workplace, for the school, for the supermarket, home, tennis club, pub and bowling-green. That we might be the best that we can be and live the “life in all its fullness” that Jesus offers.

But there is a problem.

Yesterday I was with a family that were really into Ayr United F.C.

So, I asked one of the sons-in-law “why is the family so attached to Ayr United?”

He looked at me, and said:

“Well, I’m the manager!”

But that’s because I’m odd.

I know nothing about football, and care even less.

But ministers are odd in many ways.

We are called to live our lives doing “church things” most of the time.

Perhaps not 110 hours a week – although it can feel like it.

But because of that, the preacher is focused on “church work”

and he can make it seem like that’s where the Kingdom of Heaven is, and that what you need to do is to volunteer as much as possible to doing church things, because that’s where God is and what God wants.

But when we do that, it is not much wonder that the rest of you ‘normal people’ who other things with most of your time feel that there parts of your life are:

devalued

less Christian

less spiritual.

But, think not about ministers but about God.

God worked for six days, and rested on the Sabbath.

Whilst the preacher rests for six days, and works on the Sabbath.

God does the opposite from the average preacher – God is not a preacher man.

But in a church whose heroes are missionaries,

whose preacher is full-time

and where models of Christian service mean doing “church work”,

it is perhaps not much wonder that most people, for whom the main call is not to church work, end up dissatisfied and feeling God is uninterested in their daily life.

So forget ministers and look to the Bible.

Not the heardsmen (Abraham) the horticulturalist (Adam) the food producers, the shepherds, the tent makers, the tax gatherers, the civil servants, the military officers, and the fishermen – all led to be disciples of a living God who was revealed to us in a carpenter.

The Word became a working man and dwelt among us.

And it is not just that people in the workplace can be useful to the church.

Sometimes it seems we want you to work just so you can earn money, to give to the church, and to meet non-believers, to win for the church.

But actually, work is good in itself.

In the video we watched the other Sunday nights, a teacher asked “why do the people in church pray for me as I teach Sunday School for 40 minutes a week, but show so little interest in the 40 hours I work with children in school?”

Now, we do pray regularly for teachers.

But it is important that we don't just pray that they'd been good witnesses to children, open to speak about faith: it is also important we pray and give thanks for education itself. God enjoys maths and English too. Education is good and godly and teaching is a noble calling.

(Indeed, the Education system is the Church of Scotland's gift to the nation. Before the Reformation, it was the Church that set up the universities, and after the reformation, it was John Knox's great vision to have a school for all in every community. We believe in education.)

So, we affirm the workplace:

but not just teachers and health professions and other people in public sector services.

I was reflecting the other day on what it means when ministers denounce the evils of consumerism, and hyped marketing and call supermarkets the temple of idolatry in which people worship mammon.

What does that type of sermon feel like to those of you who are sitting here who work in Tesco? Those of you who are involved in retail?

Those of you who lay out shop displays for a living?

What am I saying to my own dad, who spent his whole life in sales?

Well, yes, there are evils in materialism.

But I want to say this – God loves Tescos.

He loves the creativity of the design of the stalls.

He loves the celebration of colour, taste, sound, smell, texture, exotic food stuffs and the produce of his whole earth.

If Tesco is the new temple, then go there on Monday and worship.

Worship our colourful Creator God who make all of this, and gives those who work there the creative skills to celebrate it.

God loves artists, and graphic designers, and these who give good service  
He loves manufacturing and creativity of all types  
He calls us to be entrepreneurs – because that's who he is.  
He calls us to work, and use all the gifts we have, that society might flourish and be  
blessed under him.

And that, at last, brings us back to this passage:  
Wives submit to your husbands  
Husbands love your wives  
Children obey  
Parent don't exasperate  
Slaves obey  
Masters treat well.

This passage has had a lot of stick.  
It is dismissed as sexist.  
It is attacked as oppressive – countenancing slavery.

It has been applauded by the unspeakable and attacked by the liberationists and left  
the rest of us confused.

How can Paul, after all the inspiring theology of Colossians, after all this talk of  
renewal and reconciliation in Christ Jesus, write such inappropriate drivel?  
How on earth can this help us today?

But, the criticism misses the point.

This is not a commentary on the ideal social order of society.  
This is no political manifesto.  
There are plenty other passages about social justice, and human liberty.

No, these verses are deeply practical.  
There are about the reality of life as Paul found it.  
The basic building blocks of society were seen, by Aristotle as – husbands and wives,  
children and parents, slaves and masters.  
Maybe the structure was unjust, oppressive and ungodly,  
but what people needed to know was: “given life is as it is, how do I live on  
Monday?”  
How do I deal with my unbelieving husband?  
The Christian slave needed to know how to live, not “when the revolution comes” but  
next Wednesday when his master was away.  
The Christian master needed to know what to do right now about a lazy servant.

This is what this passage is about.

Colossians has given us a big Jesus.  
A Jesus who fills the world  
A Jesus through whom God is reconciling and renewing all things by the cross.  
And this Jesus shapes the life of the Church  
renews the life of each individual Christian

and is to be involved, as Lord and Reconciler, in every aspect of our family and economic activity.

And so, as we work out how to live on Mondays and Tuesdays.  
As we question, and ask, and pray and share and submit  
all of these “mundane” things become the place where the Kingdom is lived out.

God with us  
In Church  
In Street  
In Office  
In Tesco  
In Stock market  
In job centre and tennis club.

Let's end by re-reading this passage.  
I'm going to read a paraphrase from “The Message” – and various others are going to ask some practical questions.

*<sup>15-17</sup>Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.*

*<sup>18</sup>Wives, understand and support your husbands by submitting to them in ways that honour the Master.*

***I'm wife, and a mother and I am also a Christian.  
Although it isn't really obvious in which order they come.***

***How do I balance my responsibilities?  
How do you have a prayer life, a job, and kids?  
What does it mean to do the shopping in a godly way? (Fair trade or local produce? And do I have time to think?)***

***And I have friends who have partners that don't believe – how do they deal with the argument every time they want to come to a Church event?***

*<sup>19</sup>Husbands, go all out in love for your wives. Don't take advantage of them. <sup>21</sup>Parents, don't come down too hard on your children or you'll crush their spirits.*

***I'm a Dad.  
How do I pray with my children?  
What to do when my child wants to join the Sunday morning Tennis club?  
What do I say when the nine-year daughter asks about his friend who has two mums?  
How do we make sure our family is distinctively Christian?***

*<sup>20</sup>Children, do what your parents tell you. This delights the Master no end.*

***But what if your parents are being demanding?  
What about the guilt when you can't look after them?***

***How does the Bible guide me here?  
Does my faith make a difference?***

*22-25 Servants, do what you're told by your earthly masters. And don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you'll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being a follower of Jesus doesn't cover up bad work.*

***But does it mean to be a Christian at work?  
How does work become more than just the monotony of 5-9?  
Do I say something when colleagues swear?  
And what do I do with the pressure to work long hours, or cut corners?  
How do I juggle work, church, family, rest and keep my sanity?  
And what to say to my scientific friend who scoffs at my faith?***

*<sup>1</sup> And masters, treat your servants considerately. Be fair with them. Don't forget for a minute that you, too, serve a Master—God in heaven.*

***What does it mean to be a Christian in management?  
What difference should it make to me?***

***Does God approve of me trying to make money?  
And how do I trust him when things are not going well?  
And is anyone in Church interested in the problems I face as an employer?***

*Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.*

Now, I'm going to give each of our readers a little badge with the letters "FTCW" on them. It stands for "Full time Christian Worker" because those questions demonstrate that's what they are called to be.

Now, this sermon does not give us the answers about  
kids  
work  
parents  
family  
neighbourhood or shopping.

But ministers don't have all the answers – and there's often no right one anyway. But these are the things we need to discuss and explore and pray about. As we work out how the values of Scripture come to bear. And that's where the fellowship of the church comes into our life out there.

As we've debate the issue of homosexuality in the church, we've been doing that. Looking at the Scriptures, and at the principles of love, grace, justice and truth as the church works out answers to very difficult, but very practical questions. The strange thing is not that we've been doing that on homosexuality, it is that we've not been doing it so much about every aspect of life, and all the questions it throws up.

We need to allow faith to transform life:

that we might live as good spouses, because that pleases God  
in love and self-denial because that's living like God  
in submission, because Jesus submitted himself

We need to be good parents, because God is even more concerned about our  
Children's futures and godly upbringing than we are

We need to live as good workers, not just to please the boss, but because work is good  
and causes economy and society to flourish – and that pleases God

We need to take biblical principles of justice and compassion into the workplace –  
because God favours and protects the weak

This is how we are to live Monday to Saturday (and yes, Sunday too).

"AND WHATEVER YOU DO, IN WORD OR DEED, DO EVERYTHING IN THE NAME OF THE  
LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM." COLOSSIANS 3:17

Amen