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GBV

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“Wisdom in Work and Rest”

Central Text: Proverbs 24:30-34

30 I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, 31 and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. 32 Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction. 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, 34 and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

- Overview: It's understandable to read this passage and interpret it as a simple warning against laziness. While it is true that we need to receive this biblical warning, the gospel shows us that Jesus's life, death, resurrection, and ascension provide true and lasting motivation behind the way we work and rest.
- Most of us would probably agree that hard work and diligence are desirable qualities in a person's life, while laziness is not. But how did we come to know this? Was it our parents? A teacher? A coach? Or has this been taught to us by our experiences in life (eg. Working hard to get a job we want, or get into a certain college, etc.)?
- But while most of us are probably in agreement about the benefits of hard work and the dangers of laziness, how we respond to these realities probably differ. For example, some may be too quick to label those around them as lazy (eg. A family member, a co-worker, etc.), while others may think that laziness isn't an issue at all in their lives.
- Still, others may feel that being called "lazy" is the worst thing they could ever be called. And so in response they over-compensate; working long hours, sometimes at the expense of other relationships in their lives.
- All of this is why it's critical to have the gospel shape a healthy, life-giving perspective of work and rest. And to begin to do this, we need to focus in on Jesus's final words before his death: "It is finished." (cf. John 19:30)
- With these words, Jesus did two things concerning our topic of work and rest: he fulfilled our need for work, and he also redefined (or, repurposed) our work. He fulfilled it because we are unable (because of our sin) to "work" our way into salvation (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus paid the sacrifice for our sin (we are forgiven) but he also won for us his perfect record before God (we are justified).

- What do we do, then? Our work cannot save us, we are forgiven, AND we are counted righteous before God because of Jesus. Do we just hang out until we die or until Jesus comes back? No! There is much to do (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12). And this is what it means for him to redefine (or repurpose) our work.
- We need to remember the bigger picture of why Jesus came: to win a people for himself, and to usher in his Kingdom. And those of us who are his are now (by his Spirit) *commissioned* to participate in his on-going building of his Kingdom. And we do so while resting; resting in what Jesus has won for us.
- Think of Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I am making all things new." God is at work renewing all of creation, including us. If we are his, this should help us change the way we view our work, and it should also be the guard against laziness. Empowered and grounded in the Spirit, he has called us to participate in his work of renewal!
- And it all must begin with us understanding who we are in Christ. This must happen first. Everything we do after this flows from this knowledge that we are his (cf. 1 John 3:1).
- To close, consider my 3-year-old niece, Ruby. She was given a task to do, but her response was, "I can't do that! I'm a baby!" My wife, playfully, said, "You're a baby? I thought you were a big girl!" Confused, Ruby asked her father, "Daddy, am I a baby or a big girl?" Her father thought for a moment and replied, "Ruby, you're a big girl." And from that moment on, she carried herself differently, even opening the door for everyone when they got home, because, she commented, "I'm a big girl."
- Do you see it? Her identity informed, defined, and empowered her work. Her work didn't make her a big girl. No, instead, how her father saw her changed the way she saw her work. She wasn't a sluggard, she wasn't idle. She was living out her new identity.
- And so it should be with us. Our Father sees us as his children, and he has invited us to participate in his work of Kingdom-building!