

Text: Ecclesiastes 5:18-19

Theme: Whistling While We Work

October 21, 2018

What's one of the most popular and best remembered black and white cartoon characters? If you're thinking of Mickey Mouse, what's his most remember black and white cartoon? Steamboat Willie, right? And in Steamboat Willie, what is Mickey doing while he operates the tug boat? He's whistling while he works. King Solomon, as he pens the words of our text, reminds us that there's great wisdom in whistling while we work.

I. God clearly expects us to enjoy our work. A. But, we struggle to find such enjoyment. 1. We struggle because we've been taught that it's a necessary evil. Suppose we did a survey at Marathon Cheese and we only asked one question, "Do you enjoy your work or see it as a necessary evil?" What percentage would view it as purely a necessity? We've heard it so often, seen it so often, been told it so often, that we believe it must be true. If everybody else says it's that way, it surely must be that way! Because of that misinformation, we struggle to enjoy work, struggle to look forward to work, and definitely struggle to find a reason to whistle while we work.

2. We struggle to find enjoyment because we believe that a little more will change everything. How many of you can think of someone who believes that idea, who lives by that idea, who is always chasing after more because more is finally going to fix everything and make life great? When we're in more mode, everything and everyone becomes the competition and as that occurs, the enjoyment that might have existed goes right out the window. God didn't create us to chase after more; He created us to enjoy the moment, to enjoy where we are and what we have. When we always need more, we'll never find ourselves whistling while we work.

B. How, then, do we teach ourselves to enjoy work, to mentally whistle while we work? 1. We teach ourselves to enjoy work by realizing that it's part of God's master plan. How many mistakes has God made in the past 5,000 years? In the perfect Garden, God created work as a good thing. I don't know if work was created on the fourth day or the sixth day, and it doesn't matter. But what we know with certainty is that God created work and if God created it, it's good, good for His creation and good for us. Solomon reiterates that same theme in Ecclesiastes. Work is good because our God who created work is good and if it's good, we can teach ourselves to enjoy it.

2. We teach ourselves by acknowledging that work is a gift from God. Solomon, writes, "This is the gift of God." How many of you receive a gift for your birthday and merely toss it in the corner year after year? Unless you're a bit unusual, gifts are treated as special, as a thoughtful act from a relative or friend. God may not have wrapped work in a box with wrapping paper and a bow on it, but it's still His gift to you. And as He gives His gift, He says, "This gift comes with My blessing, with great thoughtfulness, with your best interest in mind. If you treat it as it is intended, you will find enjoyment in your work, a reason to whistle while you work."

3. We teach ourselves to enjoy work by realizing that there are more precious and valuable things in life than wealth. Maybe the world doesn't agree, but does that matter? Jesus makes a very interesting statement in our Gospel lesson, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" He goes

on to say, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." Jesus would say, "Money is merely an avenue for living, a means of acquiring your daily needs. Beyond that, it's value falls to the bottom of the rating scale." Truth be told, those who have less, enjoy life more.

4. We teach ourselves by viewing work as an opportunity to use our God-given talents. As you were growing up, how many times did your parents give you an opportunity to try out your independence, to do what you thought was the most wonderful thing in the world at that moment? Why did they give you those opportunities? So you could realize your abilities. Work is our opportunity to spread our wings before God, to use our talents for the benefit of others and as a means of saying "thank you" to our God. When work is viewed as an opportunity, we give God reason to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Well done!"

5. We teach ourselves to enjoy work by adjusting our attitude toward work. How many of you remember your parents saying, "It looks like you need an attitude adjustment today?" No matter who we are, we encounter days when our Creator says, "Boy, you sure need an attitude adjustment today!" Think of someone you know who never has a good word to say about work, who is always grumbling and complaining or blaming someone else for their actions or attitude. How long does it take before those people get on your nerves? When we make the effort to adjust our attitude toward work, then we begin to enjoy work and God smiles and says, "Nice job!"

6. We teach ourselves by being eager to share. But what does sharing have to do with enjoying work? It's evidence that we are enjoying work, that we are working for the right reason. Paul writes in I Timothy, "Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up a treasure for themselves." Does sharing earn us a ticket to heaven? Not at all. Yet sharing gives evidence of our faith, evidence we understand that good works, including our work, always follow faith. When we realize that working enhances our promise of eternal life, we realize that we have every reason to whistle while we work.

7. We teach ourselves to enjoy work by realizing that work now will enable us to enjoy our rest later. In our Epistle, it says, "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." A little work now and an eternity of rest later - that sounds like a great thing! Work now may be exhausting, stressful, and tiring, but as we face those struggles, we use them as reminders, reminders that one day all this will change, that one day work here in this imperfect, corrupted world will end and we will spend eternity resting in the presence of God. It happens when we choose to enjoy work today convinced the best is yet to come.

8. As you think of Steamboat Willie and whistling Mickey, remind yourself that whistling while you work isn't reserved for cartoon characters. It's what we do as we teach ourselves to enjoy our gifts, including the gift of work. Amen.