

How many times have you looked at a project and thought to yourself, "I can't do this. There's no sense starting because I'll never get it done?" We've all been there, haven't we? Now, how many times have you looked at that same project with a different mindset and told yourself, "Here's what I will do to get this project done?" As we all know, sometimes our first look isn't the most accurate. In our text, King Solomon looks at work and, at first glance, all he sees is meaningless. It's only when he gives it a second look that work takes on a new and very useful meaning.

I. At first glance, work looks meaningless. A. It looks like a waste of time. 1. It looks like a waste of time because most view work as an unfortunate reality. If you had your choice, would you still work? If you could choose between working a ten hour day and spending those same ten hours on the lake where the fish are biting as fast as you can reel them in, which would you prefer? We don't like to use Solomon's terminology, but it's often accurate. We hate work, despise work, look forward to the weekend and regret when the weekend is over and we have to go back to work. If we could trade work for the lake, the cabin, or the recliner, we'd do it in a heartbeat.

2. Work also looks meaningless because work makes us tired. Does anyone here have a full-time job and never get weary? If you do, there are a lot of people here this morning that would gladly trade with you. Work looks like such a waste of time because it wears our bodies out and creates health issues that we could otherwise avoid. Imagine never coming home tired from work, never having a long day at work, never wishing tomorrow was your day off. At first glance, life would be so much better, and, in our minds, life would be a much better place, more relaxing place, a more peaceful place. Weariness and exhaustion - they make work look meaningless.

3. Work looks meaningless because, in the end, we have to leave it to someone else. You've seen it and I've seen it. Someone works hard their whole life. They scrimp and save; they make do with what they have. Then, having worked hard their whole life, they give it to their kids and their kids ignore all the sweat and hard work of their parents and spend what they never earned foolishly and break their parent's hearts. Solomon hits the nail on the head when he says that we have to leave it to the one who comes after us and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool. At first glance, that reality alone makes us want to say, "Why bother working at all."

B. Although a first glance looks depressing, a second looks shows us that work brings enjoyment to life. 1. Work brings enjoyment as we remember the Creator of work. Whose idea was work? In the beginning, work was already part of God's plan. Adam and Eve, in the perfect garden, had work to do but they had a very different view of work than most today because they realized that work was created by their Creator. Today, we may be far removed from the events of Genesis 1, yet work can still increase our enjoyment as we tell ourselves, "This is from the hand of God. This is God's idea and, therefore, it must be a great idea because God doesn't create evil."

2. Work brings enjoyment when we view work as a gift. “Wait a minute! Work as a gift? Gifts come in packages with wrapping paper and bows. Work can’t possibly be a gift!” As we take a second look, Solomon reminds us that work is from the hand of God. Now, if it comes from God, isn’t it for our good? Isn’t it a gift even if we don’t recognize it as a gift? To find enjoyment in our work, Solomon encourages us to take a new view of work, to see it in a different light, to view work as a gift from God, as a special present, different for each one of us, yet given to us by the hand of God. When we view work as a gift, work will never look the same again.

3. Work brings enjoyment when we realize that work exercises our creativity. Suppose work didn’t exist. How much of our brain would we use? How much of the creativity that God placed into our minds would we put to good use? God created work as an opportunity to use our brain, to use our creativity to do incredible things. Of all the things invented in our world in the past five hundred years, how many of them would exist if people hadn’t exercised their creativity? When we come up with ideas, when we design programs or projects, they bring us enjoyment while we are working because we had the opportunity to exercise our creativity.

4. Work brings enjoyment when we realize that work is our opportunity to use our God-given gifts and talents. How many gifts do you possess at this moment? What percentage of your talents are you using on a weekly basis? Far less than you possess. Work is one of our greatest opportunities to share our gifts and to honor God. God loves to see us use our abilities to help someone else because each time we use our talents, we acknowledge our Creator. We tell the world God is working through us. Through our work, wherever it might be, we have the opportunity to use those gifts God has given each one of us, gifts given for the benefit of others.

5. Work also brings enjoyment by giving us the opportunity to do what God designed us to do. What if God gave you incredible abilities that others didn’t possess, but you were never able to use them? Work is our opportunity to do what God designed us to do, to use our talents, to accomplish great things. It’s not accidental that you do what you do, that you excel in one area and someone else excels in another area. God designed it that way. If we were all good at the same thing, life would never work. Through our work, God gives us the opportunity to do our part to make His amazing world work as He needs it to work.

6. Work brings enjoyment when we work with an attitude. How many people do you know who have a real attitude, who have that negative, pessimistic, the world is out to get me, everything always goes wrong for me attitude? As we go to work, God waits for us to work with an attitude, with an attitude of gratefulness, of appreciation, of thankfulness. He waits for us to walk into our work place with an attitude that says, “Work is God’s idea and that makes it good. While I’m here today, I intend to demonstrate an attitude that reflects the God who gave me the opportunity to do what I do - to work in a manner that honors my Creator.”

7. In the minds of nearly every one of us, work needs a second look, a second look that moves us from “meaningless, meaningless” to “work is great because my God who created it is great!” Amen.