

Missed Appointment

Aspirations, Expectations, and Occupations

August 13, 2023

Today we're learning to defeat our disappointment by adjusting how we look at our work. Cuz *what* we're working for and *why* – determines whether we feel our *efforts* were *worth it* or *wasted*. So, if you wanna *check* yourself *before* you wreck yourself, answer this: **What are you working for?**



Cuz as we saw last week, **avoiding disappointment is all about having godly aspirations without earthly expectations.** So we need to *trust* God's got a perfect *position* and *purpose* for every person in His plan – even if you *haven't* seen *yours* yet! Cuz if we faithfully hang in there, He'll *reveal* the place we belong that He had planned *all along*, and we'll get to feel the fulfilling *joy* of finding our *fit*. Just like Matthias does when Judas' position opens up and *Peter* points out *someone* needs a promotion:

It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us... So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ... Then they cast lots, [to fulfil God's 1000 year plan and purpose] and the lot fell to Matthias; so *he* was added to the eleven apostles. – Acts 1:15-26 NIV

Hooray! Three cheers for Matt! Who *doesn't* love the *inspiring* story of an *underdog* getting a *starting spot* on the team *after* faithfully working as a backup?! It just fills *us* with hope for all our *own* aspirations! And it's why we love guys like reigning 'Comeback Player of the Year' Geno Smith. Cuz he spent *seven* years on *four* NFL teams as a backup *before* he got the call to start for the Seahawks last season. So, *y'know*, *maybe I still got a shot!*

But before we *all* start preparing for *our* starting spot on *God's* squad – shouldn't we weigh *all* the outcomes? Because the truth *is*, we're *all* more likely to be lottery *losers* than *winners*. So **why aren't we asking, "What about Barsabbas?"** How do you think *he* felt when he missed being *God's* 12th man by a single roll of *Yahweh Yahtzee*?! How would *you* feel? Well, *everything* hinges on how *you* answer that. Because, **not everyone is called up but everyone is called out.**

Because every one of us *has* a God-given appointment and regardless of the *prestige* or *power* of the position, **our heart's desire is exposed by how we handle our work.** Do you act like you deserve a *bigger* and *better* life? Are you holding back effort while you *wait* for your 'Matthias moment'? Are you *expecting* God to give you more *material wealth* to manage or an appointment with more *authority* to *accomplish* His will? Well *maybe He will*. Maybe *He won't*. But in the meantime, here's what we *do* know for sure: **if you got time to lean, you got time to clean!**

[Regardless of your present position or His future plans – God's got work for you to do *today* cuz:] The harvest *is* plentiful but the workers *are* few. - Matthew 9:37 NIV

And if many hands make light work, the *fewer* the *heavier*! So on *God's* staff, **time waiting is time wasted** – making it in *everybody's* best interest to work as *hard* as we can *wherever* we're at. However, we tend to save that kind of energy for the position we feel is our *best* and most *blessed*. I mean, we all *know* **we only increase effort if the outcome is appealing**; that's why we offer *awards, rewards, commissions, tips, perks, benefits, and bonuses*! Cuz *getting* what we want out of *our work* is the secret to job satisfaction. So, what's the secret *getting* what we want? Well:

Take delight in the *Lord*, and *He* will give you the desires of your heart. - Psalm 37:4 NIV



Get it? Learn to *want* what God wants to *give* and you'll naturally *love* the *work-life* you live. An increase in *faith* and *trust* means an increase in *joy* and *fulfillment*. **Job satisfaction isn't about position it's about perspective.** And Geno Smith drove that point downfield after *being* asked if he was ever *frustrated* by all his time on the sideline, saying, "**My 'tough' times would be a dream to someone else**" And when *further* prodded to comment on how *good* it *must feel* to get recognized for his work now, he said, "**All glory to God for the gifts and more.**"



My man! If you want a prime *example* of a right *heart* at work, *that's* it; **see the bad as good and the good as God!** Cuz the *more* we look *past* *face-value*, the more we can *see* *faith's* value. And when we believe our *Boss* knows best, we're excited to up our effort because we *trust* every assignment and appointment has an *awesome* outcome! And that's how we can be unaffected by the ups and downs of *any* occupation; **devotion means promotions or demotions don't determine our emotions.** So if Barsabbas was the *devoted* disciple he appeared to be, that missed appointment that went to Matthias must have just been an interesting afternoon before he got to get back to doing his dream job already in progress! And doesn't *that* all sound just *rosy* and *righteous*?



Yeah, but doesn't it *also* sound a little *impractical* and... *impossible*? *Honestly*, has *your* faith kept you unaffected by all *your* job's ups and downs? I didn't think so! So how do we straighten out *our* heart's desires so that all *our* work has the fulfilling *joy* of feeling our *fit*? Well, **it's all about understanding the difference between our career and our calling. And then merging them.**

Y'see, **our career is all about the pursuit of our earthly goals** while **our calling is all about the pursuit of God's eternal good.** And the relationship between the two can range from *one and the same* to *mutually exclusive*. **It all depends on the heart we have when we work.** And getting it to that *rosy* and *righteous* place where there's *no* disappointment in *any* appointment takes three things: **Passion, Purpose, and Priorities.** So where does *passion* come from? Well, *you... And God!*

We get *that* deep sense of satisfaction when we're operating at peak-efficiency and **the fire we feel comes from flexing our God-given gifts.** It's why Olympians compete, musicians perform, and I play fantasy football! But regardless of the work:

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its *various* forms. – Peter 4:10-11 NIV

Cuz it works! **Put God's gifts in your work to connect with your passion.**



Back when I was a bartender but didn't attend church, I had all my earthly desires met and yet, surprisingly I started falling apart emotionally. And as a momma's boy, I unloaded all my despair on my sweet mother. So one Sunday, she hung around her church to ask her pastor if he had any advice for her sweet son who was on the outs with God. And Bruce said, **"Tell him to be the best bartender in the world!"** So she did. And I did. And it's part of why I'm here. Cuz loving anything inches us closer to knowing God's love. Working anywhere with passion inches us closer to knowing God's plan. And **using our gifts inches us closer to knowing the God who gave them.** And when we inch closer to God's love, plan, and gifts, we start to see His *purpose*.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which *God* prepared in advance for *us* to *do*. - Ephesians 2:10 NIV

Our purpose is revealed when we get a taste of the work that fits the gifts God gave. Which above all is **"to do good works"** cuz if you missed it – our job is to **"use whatever gift you have received to serve others"**!

So just **put God's goals in your work to connect with your purpose.** Back in WWII, Dorothy Sayers wrote about how interesting it was that when people who worked in other fields joined the military to help the war effort, they were often surprised to find the work more joyful than their previous professions. Because it was the first time they weren't working for merely *material* rewards, but for a *cause* that really *mattered*. **They felt they were doing 'good' because they were protecting the lives and values of others.** Well of course they did –

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. **[His commands are our created purpose and in case you're unclear on what they are:]** - Ecclesiastes 12:13 NIV

The *entire law* is fulfilled in keeping this *one* command: **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** - Galatians 5:14 NIV

Our entire purpose is fulfilled when we work for that goal! And God gave us *gifts* make us *effective* and get us *fired up* once we've answered the *call* to come work for *Him* and His *plan*. So to add *purpose* to your *passion* – it's all about *servicing others*. Which can get *tricky*. Cuz all the work *down here* tends to take on a life of its own, and **if we're not careful, even serving others can work against God's goals!** In fact, imagine if Barsabbas *did* display disappointment because of his missed appointment; he'd be showing his heart was still split which would be a big problem:

[Cuz Paul lays out how presenting that perspective can pervert our purpose:] Am I now trying to win the *approval* of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to *please* people? If I were still trying to please *people*, I would not be a servant of *Christ*. – Galatians 1:10 NIV

We *can't* work for two bosses and give them *each* 100%! So, how do we work toward the earthly goals of our career and the eternal good of God's calling? Well, just **get your priorities straight!**

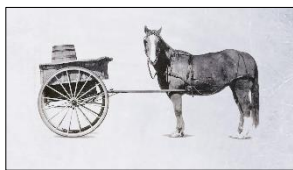
[Cuz after dismissing His disciples' earthly desires, Jesus explains] seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. - Matthew 6:31-33 NIV

And no wonder we can get confused, this is a *nuanced* point: He's not saying work for the eternal and forget about the earthly, He's saying work for the eternal and you'll *also* get the earthly! And the order of importance is everything – cuz like C.S. Lewis says about this: **“Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’; aim at earth and you will get neither.”**

Remember, **You can serve people without serving God** but **You can't serve God without serving people**. So to get our *heart* in the right *place*, we have to keep our *priorities* in the right *order*:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. - Colossians 3:23-24 NIV

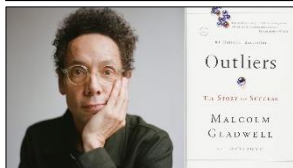
So if you want both birds with one stone, **put God's calling first to connect it to your career**. And don't let your *earthly* work *or* reward ever overshadow that *real* reason behind your *passion* and *purpose*! Because as Solomon warns, to keep our *motivation*, we can't have *earthly expectation*:



[So yeah:] Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, ... [for the Lord's reward; otherwise you'll be let down by down here cuz:] The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all. - Ecclesiastes 9:10-11 NIV



Malcolm Gladwell wrote a wonderful book called *Outliers* that aimed to explain the origins of extraordinary earthly success – and guess what he concluded? **“Success is the result of what sociologists like to call ‘accumulative advantage.’”** And just like the Bible says, from tech billionaires to star athletes, chance and circumstance are *the* deciding factors in career success. Meaning everything comes down to external forces beyond *our* earthly control. **But they're well within God's control!**



So whatever hand we've been dealt or however the dice roll – we should recognize we've all been deliberately given the passion and purpose to be the right person at the right time to fulfil our calling in any career! We just have to have the right priorities to see it and seize it! So

Commit to the Lord *whatever* you do, and He will establish your plans. The Lord works out everything [on earth and in heaven] to its proper end. - Proverbs 16:2-4 NIV

So what about Barsabbas? I'm not really worried about him. Everything sorts itself out once we know what we're working for. And when all your efforts are seen as working for your Savior – it's easy to see bad as good and good as God. And I'm pretty sure Barsabbas knew what he was really working for, because he literally walked with God and talked with God every day.

Do you? If so, you should already know, **there's no such thing as second string on God's team.**

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.