

## MONDAY MANNA

9 November 2020

### WHAT ARE YOU REALLY WORKING FOR?

By Robert J. Tamasy

Have you ever had moments when you asked yourself, “What am I really working for?” I suspect many of us have wondered about this, at least once in a while. The daily grind, the energy, effort and long hours expended. Especially when cherished goals and aspirations still seem out of reach.

Recently I heard a humorous story that seemed to address this frustration: When wealthy real estate magnate died, he left instructions that his body be cremated, and then have his ashes put into hourglasses. These hourglasses were to be given to his banker, his CPA, and the income tax agent who had conducted his numerous audits over the years. In his will, the rich executive explained his reasoning. He said that after realising how much of the money he had earned ultimately had gone to these men, the rich man quipped in his will, “I spent much of my life working for these people. I might as well keep working for them after I’m dead.”

This cynical look at life is not uncommon. In fact, in the Bible’s Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon – reputed to have been the richest and wisest man in the world – opened with this perspective: *“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. ‘Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.’* (Ecclesiastes 1:2). Do you sense the ancient king’s frustration?

He continues, *“What does a man gain from all his labour at which he toils under the sun?... There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow”* (Ecclesiastes 1:3,11). Sounds like what the wealthy man was thinking when he ordered his ashes be put into hourglasses. At least a small part of himself would continue in that way.

King Solomon continued his lament later in his book: *“So I hated life, because that work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?”* (Ecclesiastes 2:17-19).

So, is that it? Is the work that we do, the many hours and weeks and months and years we devote to building our careers, ultimately of no value? Thankfully, the Scriptures do not conclude with Solomon’s complaints. In fact, if we desire for our lives to have true meaning and lasting impact, all we need to do is follow the exhortation Jesus Christ gave during His so-called Sermon on the Mount.

After many strong admonitions, including some that went against long-standing traditions and practices of that time, Jesus offered His hearers an assurance that their lives could make a difference – one that would last for eternity:

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:19-21).

How can we do this? Jesus provided the answer. *“But seek first (God’s) kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Matthew 6:33). I would paraphrase it this way: We can spend our lives working for ourselves and leave everything behind. Or we can devote ourselves to serving the Lord and others in His name, and build a legacy, sending the fruits of our labours on ahead.

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© 2020. Robert J. Tamasy has written Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship; Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace; and The Heart of Mentoring, co-authored with David A. Stoddard. Bob's biweekly blog is: [www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com](http://www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com).

### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

At the beginning we see the question, "What am I really working for?" Has that, or a similar question, ever crossed your mind? What has been your answer?

We find two examples – the wealthy real estate magnate, and King Solomon – who both seem to have concluded that much of what we devote our lives to, especially in the workplace, leads to futility and frustration. How do you respond to this perspective? If a person has this attitude, what impact will it have on how he or she pursues life?

Next, we see the contrast, Jesus Christ encouraging His followers to store up treasures in heaven, instead of seeking to store up treasures on earth. What do you think this means?

Jesus' last admonition is to "seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness." How does someone go about trying to do that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century marketplace, with its volatile, ever-changing, highly competitive environment? Especially when it seems that the majority of people and companies are not doing that – or have any desire to do so?

*NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:*

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10, 12:13-14

1 Corinthians 3:9, 10:31

2 Corinthians 5:17-21