

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25. A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,²⁵ for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?

Give thanks for Christian Vocations.

1. For those vocations to which God has called you

2. For those Christians among us who faithfully carry out their callings.

Each morning they were to get up and carry out their duties with thanks. God's Word tells us that the Levites were in charge of the daily duties of the tabernacle that done daily could have become a bit mundane. They were in charge of putting the showbread out on the table, they were to take care of the flour for the grain offerings, the unleavened wafers, the baking and the mixing, and all measurements of quantity and size. And then in 1 Chronicles 23:30 God's Word tells us something else that they were to do each and every day. ***They were also to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD. They were to do the same in the evening.***

On this morning of thanksgiving as we come before the LORD in his house we pray that the LORD may help us to take this to heart. May we too praise our God and give thanks to him as we carry out the duties that God has given to us. And while you might not work in the temple, or in the tabernacle, or at the church full time, each and every day you serve your LORD as you carry out the duties and responsibilities that God has placed before you in your individual callings. Remember that the LORD has given us his Word which tells us, ***"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*** – ***Colossians 3:17.***

Whatever we do, we do it with the understanding that comes through faith: that this is all by God's design and I will therefore, serve my God with thanksgiving as I use the gifts and abilities that He has given me in the situation of life that I am now in. We give thanks for our Christian callings, we will live thankful lives as we carry out our vocations in Christ.

How much time, however, do we spend in the "if only" and the "what ifs" of life? *"What if I had taken that job or made that other choice?"* Those who are young might wonder, *"What if I was older?"* *"If only I could do those things I want to do right now?"* Those of you who are older might wonder, *"If only I were younger and could do the things that I used to do?"* We could spend a lot of time in the "if only" and the "what ifs" of life. And it is not a bad thing to look back fondly or to look forward with bold aspirations; to have goals, to be driven, to have dreams. It's not a bad thing to aspire toward climbing the corporate ladder, "what if I could make it to manager" or to consider a career change. It's not a bad thing to have dreams about making adjustments and improvements in life.

“If only” I had that new car, “what if” I had that new kitchen or guest room. But while we might visit those places periodically for motivation or inspiration there is a danger in dwelling in those “if onlys” and the “what ifs” of life. And the danger is that we overlook the blessings of life and the things and opportunities that we do have.

And so on this day of thanksgiving let us give thanks for the enjoyment found in our daily Christian vocations. Let us give thanks for the faith that we have been given and the life that we have been handed. For it is in this very life that we live that we have opportunity to live out our faith even in the daily labors of life. Let us look around and give thanks that *this the place that I am in. This is the role that I serve. These are the tasks that the LORD has given me to do. This is the calling that I have received from my God’s gracious hand.*

And so with that understanding that comes from faith these words ring very true, ***A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?*** There is good reason to give thanks to God for our everyday tasks and labors for through these labors God provides for us, feeds us, and cares for us. God is the one who gives us the gifts and abilities to earn a living. The food that will be spread before us this holiday surely comes to us through such means and it comes certainly not without the hand and blessing of God. We give thanks that God provides for our physical needs. But we also give thanks for the joy and satisfaction that comes from work *for this too is from the hand of God. For not only has God opened his hand and blessed me with plenty of things, but he has given me plenty of things to do.* For this we can be grateful. In these daily labors the LORD blesses us with opportunities to live out our Christian faith and he gives us the satisfaction of carrying out our Christian vocations.

We give thanks that God gives us the good of work. And even if we are too young to have a job, or have long since retired, the LORD blesses us with the satisfaction of fulfilling the roles to which he has currently called us. And for this we ought to give thanks as well.

And so let’s think about that for a little while. What has God called you to do now? In this moment, at this stage of life, has he called you to be active in the workforce or has he called you to fill your time with the stuff of retirement? Has he called you to be a husband or wife? Has God called you to be parent or a son or a daughter? Has he called you to care for your child or are you at the stage or your life where you have been called to care for an ailing parent or spouse? Or maybe your role has changed and you aren’t quite sure what God has called you to do. Let us all consider how you can use the gifts and abilities that God has given you to serve your God and those around you. Consider how God can work through you as the masks of God. Yes, the masks of God; for God accomplishes his goals, he meets the needs of others, and he demonstrates and shares his

love through you. Yes, God is at work behind all of this, working through you, as you carry out your daily work in Christ. Let us give thanks for our Christian vocations.

There are certainly challenges and frustrations in daily roles of life, especially when we have to juggle several vocations at once. But we are reminded that there is wisdom and joy in finding satisfaction in the work of the day, in this stage of life, in this context that we find ourselves in. And knowing and taking time to recognize that God has placed us in these roles will help us to find contentment. These are Christian vocations, there are opportunities for God to work through me, and for me to let the love of Christ shine through in the way I faithfully carry out these callings. With this understanding we can stand up each morning thanking God for the tasks and even the challenges of the day. There is wisdom and satisfaction to be found by going from day to day not thinking about what I could be doing, but being content in the tasks that God has placed before me. To be able to do this is a blessing from God that will free us from regret, free us from frustration and disappointment, and free us to serve our God in thanksgiving.

And we do it all in faith. In faith we know and believe that *“God created me... and that he gave me my body and soul, my eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.”* In faith we recognize his role in blessing us in every way, and thus by using our gifts and abilities, our time and talents, our resources and treasures in God pleasing ways, we praise and thank our God. In faith we know and believe our gracious God watches over all things and that he has guided the affairs of this life so that I am where he has called me to be. Therefore, we praise and thank our God by carrying out the roles that he has given us. Finally, in faith we also know and believe in his love. We know and believe that Jesus lived out the role of Savior and Redeemer perfectly, and as the Christ he continues to live and rule and serve in love as my Prophet, Priest, and King. As my Savior he lived and died and rose again to free us from our sins. He takes away our guilt. He has even forgiven us for the times that we have failed to fulfill our roles as we should. Freed from guilt, freed from regret, confident of his love and care we can stand each morning and we praise and thank our God and Savior for the life that he has given us. Even though we know the day may be filled with challenges we give him thanks for the tasks of the day.

We give thanks for our Christian vocations. We give thanks for the roles that God has called us to carry out. And we give thanks for those among us who in faith fulfill their different roles.

We give thanks for the young teacher who spends her days, and good number of her nights, planning and preparing and carrying out the work that she has been called to as she faithfully serves her LORD and those entrusted to her care. We give thanks for the Christian mother or father who works to clean the house and do the laundry only to have the little ones make a mess of both the clothes and the house that were just cleaned. We give thanks that faithful parents fill that role, that calling, and they get up with God’s help

to do it again the next day. We give thanks for the Christian wife or husband who faithfully goes off to work each day but is also careful to make time for spouse and children at the end of the day. We give thanks for the Christian children who bring joy and laughter to the home and who listen and obey their parents for this is what they have been called to do. We give thanks the Christian retiree who gives of his time to visit with friends who are hurting, who tends to his ailing wife, and yet still makes enough time to lend a hand at church whenever needed. We give thanks for the good Christian woman who used to be so active but now restricted by the challenges of age has found a new calling in saying daily prayers for her grandchildren and by making the occasional phone call to encourage old friends. And the list for which to be thankful goes on and on. Christian nurses and farmers, bank tellers and business owners, hair dressers and contractors, janitors and office workers... so on and so on. These are brothers and sisters in the faith who carry out their Christian vocations not just to earn a wage, or for selfish gain, but they do their work as if they were serving the LORD himself. Each may have their moments of frustration and consternation but daily renewed by the love of Christ they find satisfaction in the work that they have been called to do.

As we take a few days off from the regular tasks and routines let us pause to give thanks to God. For not only has he given us plenty of things, but he has given us plenty of things to do. We give him thank for giving us work to do, for using us to make his world turn. We give thanks that he uses us to accomplish tasks; he uses our time and talents to care for others; he uses our efforts, prayers, treasures and resources to operate his church for the spreading of the gospel. Finally we give thanks for daily using us to be his masks. He is at work behind us as we carry out our individual callings, our Christian vocations, filled with his love.

I'm going to end with a personal prayer of thanksgiving that I hope you may be able to use as a model to develop your own similar prayer thanking God for the roles to which he has called you. You may follow along and fill in your vocations in place of mine.

LORD thank you for calling me to be a (personal vocation) husband, a father of four, (public vocation or occupation) a pastor of two congregations, and for allowing me to (other vocations) minister to many other men, women, children, and parents outside of our congregations through jail ministry, Little Lambs, and Soccer Camp. Help me to find satisfaction in my work, keep me from sinking into the frustrations and disappointment that could come from wondering "what if" and "if only". Help me to rejoice in the blessings and the challenges of each new day knowing that I am loved and forgiven by you. Thank you for the good of work and the pleasures of friendships and the joy of family. And on this day of rest and Thanksgiving open my eyes to see the blessings you give so that I may serve you in all I do with daily joy and thanksgiving. Amen.