



Redefined: Community and Work

Colossians 3:9-17

God redefines our community and work so that it looks like Jesus and is powered by Jesus.

As we come out of a global pandemic, much is returning to “normal” – thank God! People are gathering with friends and families and making vacation plans. And yet, many are saying that it is more of a reset than a move back to normal. Our sense of community and work has changed, and it would be a shame in this time not to ask God how He would redefine us.

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COMMUNITY

Looks like Jesus

- Vs. 9 – 11 speak of taking off your old self and putting on the new self: a new self that is marked by the diversity and oneness of Christ. This echoes the apostle Paul’s words in Galatians 3:28, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*
- This redefinition of community was crazy radical for the Ancient Near East. People were typically segregated and discriminated against depending on one’s ethnicity, socio-economic status, and gender.

“It was not a pretty place. Poverty, slavery, prostitution, and the abuse of women and children were commonplace. It was a world of suffering and a world of fear. Racism and gross inequity were widespread and human life was cheap.” Steve Green, Foreword to the book *Unimaginable – What our World would be like without Christianity*

- This is a radical redefining where the core attribute of a Christian is their oneness in Christ – marked and sealed by the love of Jesus, rescued and restored, adopted as a beloved child of God. We are still different ethnicities, colors, shapes, sizes, personalities, and interests. We are a reflection of the beautiful diversity of God. But the most important and core distinction is that we are defined by Christ, and it is Christ that brings us together.
- The virtues of Jesus (v. 12) are compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; we should bear with each other and forgive one another. And love binds us all together in unity. It is beautiful imagery of covering ourselves like clothing, being defined and distinguished by these virtues. “And over all these virtues put on love” - love amplifies these virtues and is the reflection of the posture of the heart.

Powered by Jesus

- We cannot do this on our own; it must be powered by Jesus. We see this language in Colossians 3:1-4, “raised with Christ”, “life is hidden with Christ”, “Christ, who is your life”, and verse 12, “therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved”. We love because He first loved us.
- VBS truths
 - Jesus’ power helps us do hard things
 - Jesus’ power gives us hope
 - Jesus’ power helps us to be bold
 - Jesus’ power lets us live forever
 - Jesus’ power helps us to be good friends

God redefines our community to look like Jesus and be powered by Jesus so that (v. 17), “And 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.”

EVERYDAY LIFE AND WORK

- This is applied to our “Everyday Life”. In the remaining verses 18-25, we see that this redefinition of community is applied to husband and wives, kids, slaves, and even our place of work.
- Comment about slavery – the apostle Paul is not endorsing the status quo of slavery. He is subtly undermining the institution of slavery as he speaks about slaves being one in Christ with others. In the book of Philemon, he advocates for a runaway slave named Onesimus to be received by his master Philemon as a dear brother.
- In the context of work, we see this echoed again in Colossians 3:23 – “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”
- Thirty-eight times in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, God is said to find the aroma of work pleasing.

- Psalm 90:17, “May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands.” What if we started each day of work with this prayer?
- Integration of Work & Worship

“Little by little, workers begin to make God’s patterns of work their own. In and through worship, they begin to inhabit this alternative economy of God. The lawyer can pray prayers for God’s justice. The construction worker can read texts about God’s craftsmanship. The oppressed field laborer can sing songs about God’s liberation. The therapist can hear prophecies about God’s coming restoration and healing. In and through worship, workers encounter the work of God, the economy of God. In this, they are invited to make God’s patterns and practices of work their own.”
Matthew Kaemingk and Cory Wilson *Work and Worship – Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy*

Action Steps

- Summer Park Picnics – June & August
- Work & Worship Interactive Experience – Thursday, June 17
- Consecrating ourselves – “Lord, I consecrate myself for Your community and work.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What was community and work like for you during the pandemic? What does it look like for you right now?
- Of all the virtues that we need to clothe ourselves with, which one comes naturally to you? Which one is most difficult?
- How might God be redefining your community and work?