

Psalm 90:10, 12, 14, 16-17  
Labor of Love  
WRCoB 9.5.21

I had an interesting conversation with Zherina  
One morning on our way to school this past week.

She is in her second week of school  
And feeling the anguish of adjusting  
To the new routine.

I told her the first weeks are always tough.

But soon, she'll adjust to life in school.  
And before she knows it, summer will be here.

And then I ended with the comment  
"Just think, you only have seven more years to go.  
Eleven if you count college."

Well, to her, seven more years seems like an eternity.

Well, it doesn't seem that long ago  
That I felt the same when I entered the work force  
At eighteen-years-old.

"So this is what I'm going to be doing  
For the next 50 years of my life?"

Now some forty-eight years later  
I ask myself, "Where **did** all those years go?"

Well, in all those years

I worked in a factory, drove a semi, a dump truck  
Hauled furniture cross-country

Operated a skid-steer loader

A rubber-tired loader, a track loader  
And trencher.

I have milked cows, pitched manure

Planted corn, made hay  
Worked seven days a week  
And twelve-hour days

I have poured and finished concrete

Banged nails and shingled roofs.

I have dug wells, built dams, and water storage tanks

Traveling the back roads of Nigeria in 110-degree heat.

I entered seminary at the age of forty

Still working and earned a divinity degree.  
And have pastored for the last twenty-five years.

That's where all those years went.

When you're standing at this end of a working career

As many of you are, it is hard to believe  
How fast one's life is lived.

And so, I reminded Zherina, enjoy it while you can.

**Psalm 90:10 The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is**

**only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.**

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And so, as we celebrate Labor Day weekend  
And back to school for students,  
Teachers, administrators  
And support staff

I want to recognize and honor the amazing work  
That is going on all around us.

For all the blue-collar and the white-collar workers  
All of who are vital to our society's wellbeing.

I applaud you. Well done!

It was Martin Luther King, Jr. who said

*“No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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Labor Day was created to highlight  
The hard work of the American worker.

*It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country.* (United States Department of Labor).

It has been a federal holiday since 1894.

Labor Day weekend is also the gateway  
Between summer and fall months.

We can look forward to the return to school  
The shortening of days  
And hopefully a reprieve from the heat.

And so, today, on this Labor Weekend  
I recognize the blessing of work.

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There isn't anyone in this sanctuary or at home  
Older than 21  
Who hasn't had to work for a living.

Some of us have had to work a 9 to 5  
For the better part of our life  
That we didn't enjoy or found much meaning in

But we did it because it was a job and work to do  
To pay bills, raise a family  
And provide for the basics needed in life.

However, my hope is that most of us  
Have or have had occupations that we loved.

And it really doesn't matter  
Whether it's a blue-collar or white-collar job

Whether it requires 12 years of post-graduate school  
Or a work-study program.

I had one employer tell me that.  
That I was in a work-study program.

He was going to work me until I dropped  
And then he'd stick a book under my nose!

If it is what you feel called to do  
Rest assured that where God wants you.

This past Thursday, Pat G  
Posted something on Facebook  
That resonated with me.

It was the image of two men  
One a white-collar worker  
And the other a blue-collar worker  
With this caption.

*The guy on the left has a Bachelor's degree & Law degree.  
He owes over \$250,000 in student loans. He works for the  
Law where he earns \$130,000 annually.*

*The guy on the right is a high school graduate. He has no  
college education. He works as an Electric Lineman. He  
owes zero in student loans, and he earns \$160,000 annually.*

*Teach your kids about skilled trades and alternative options  
to make good income & have low debt. IT'S NOT ABOUT  
HAVING A DEGREE.*

Personally, I don't know any lineman  
Earning \$160,000 per year  
But the point is taken.

It doesn't matter what you do.  
It matters how you do it!

I pray you have or had found your passion.

That's where you will make your biggest contribution  
To those who depend on you and the larger society.

**Deuteronomy 15:10 NIV**

**<sup>10</sup> Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.**

There's no getting around it  
We have to do something to make a living.

For most of us, over the course of our career  
We will or will have worked  
More than 90,000 hours at our workplace.

We need to make the best of what God has given us.  
It will have lasting impact on the world around us.

*A hundred times every day, I remind myself that my inner and outer life depend on the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving. – Albert Einstein*

Work is such an important part of who we are.

- Work structures our life
- Work gives us a personal and social identity
- Work bonds us to family and society
- Work gives us ways of making money, allowing the purchase of essential and nonessential goods
- Work provides a sense of self worth

Work is also part of our society's make up

- Work promotes community cohesion and safety
- Work increases civic participation
- Work reduces public spending, i.e., welfare benefits, etc.
- Work promotes social and economic development.

(Adapted from [www.inworkproject.eu](http://www.inworkproject.eu))

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God blesses the work we do

If we do it with heart and soul.

No matter how menial the task is

God blesses those who do it wholeheartedly.

And much of our work is made up of menial tasks

Tasks that just need to get done

To satisfy the larger purpose of the work.

Work is so much more than just paying the bills.

Work gives purpose to life.

It challenges and satisfies

It increases our knowledge

And deepens our persistence and patience.

It humbles us

Keeping our feet on solid ground.

It is what drives most of us to get up in the morning.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Without ambition one starts nothing. Without work one finishes nothing. The prize will not be sent to you. You have to win it. – Ralph Waldo Emerson*

If you love your work . . . all the better.

*Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.- Confucius*

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It's awful hard to know what job you will love  
Coming out of high school or college.

I am not a super, strong advocate  
For choosing a specific field of work out of school  
That you plan to do for the rest of your life.

There are some of us who take half a working career  
To discover what they love to do.

And sometimes, what God is preparing you for  
Takes half a working career to get you there.

I often say  
I don't know whether God was calling me  
To the ministry right from the start

And I wasn't paying any attention.

Or God was grooming me for the first 20 working years  
Before calling me to the ministry.  
I believe the latter.

I know I would have been a far worse pastor  
If I had gone into it at the very beginning.

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I don't regret a single job I worked.

Some were very good jobs  
With very good people to work with.

And some were very bad jobs  
With not so very good people to work with.

I am glad I worked them all.

It all adds to the human experience.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:22 NRSV**

**<sup>22</sup> So I saw that there is nothing better than that all  
should enjoy their work, for that is their lot; who can  
bring them to see what will be after them?**

We do the best we can with what limited vision we have.

Through it all we thank God for taking us thus far.

For God has had his hand in it.

May God bless the work of our hands  
So that we in turn can bless what God is doing.

### **Colossians 3:23 NIV**

**<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as  
working for the Lord, not for human masters.**

# THE BLESSINGS OF HANDS

CAROL PENNER

PASTOR: BLESS THE WORK OF OUR HANDS, O GOD.

BLESS THE HANDS THAT WORK THE LAND;

HANDS THAT MOVE EARTH, PLANT SEEDS AND HARVEST,

HANDS WITH CALLOUSES AND DIRTY FINGERNAILS, STRONG HANDS.

**PEOPLE: BLESS THE HANDS THAT USE MACHINES;**

**HANDS THAT DRIVE CARS, TRUCKS AND FORKLIFTS,**

**HANDS ON COMPUTER KEYBOARDS, CAPABLE HANDS.**

PASTOR: BLESS THE HANDS THAT MAKE THINGS;

HANDS THAT MANUFACTURE AND CREATE,

WORKING WOOD AND METAL AND PLASTIC, PRACTICAL HANDS.

**PEOPLE: BLESS THE HANDS THAT CLEAN;**

**HANDS THAT WASH, MOP AND SCRUB,**

**HANDS THAT KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH SOAP, DETERMINED  
HANDS.**

PASTOR: BLESS THE HANDS THAT MAKE MUSIC AND ART;

HANDS THAT PLAY INSTRUMENTS AND HOLD PAINTBRUSHES,

HANDS THAT ARE CREATIVE TOOLS, ARTISTIC HANDS.

**PEOPLE: BLESS THE HANDS THAT CARE FOR PEOPLE;**

**HANDS THAT COOK AND FEED, HEAL AND NURTURE,**

**HANDS WITH A GENTLE TOUCH, LOVING HANDS.**

PASTOR: BLESS THE HANDS THAT ARE GENEROUS;

HANDS THAT GIVE AWAY MONEY AND FOOD,

HANDS THAT ARE ALWAYS TRYING TO BE EMPTY, CHRIST-LIKE HANDS.

**ALL: BLESS THE TINY, BABY HANDS.**

**BLESS THE STRONG ADULT HANDS.**

**BLESS THE HANDS THAT ARE FOLDED IN PRAYER.**

**BLESS THE HANDS THAT ARE LIFTED IN PRAISE.**

**OUR HANDS DO THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS,**

**O GOD OUR CREATOR. AMEN.**