



Work AND rest

I was grateful for Peter Lawrence's article in the Spring edition of *Country Way* reminding us of the need to rest. But I wanted to offer a slightly different perspective of the joy of work...

Peter quite rightly points out that for many, work can become a burden, however this is not what God intended. Prior to the fall, in Genesis 2, we read that God took man and placed him in the garden to work it and take care of it. God created humankind with a desire that we might take part in the productive work of labour. It is as part of His creative task, that the responsibility for the tilling and keeping of the garden is placed with humans. Right from the start of life, a task, or job of work, is given by God to humankind and from that moment on work is declared as intrinsic to human life and a vital part of correct, created human existence. It is part of God's original, unspoiled plan that we should work, and enjoy the work that we do, and surely this is most closely followed by those in the traditional rural industries such as agriculture.

I recognise that for lots of people, including many Christians, that sense of enjoyment has long disappeared but that should not detract from God's plan. It is as a consequence of the fall that work became 'painful' (Genesis 3,17) but significantly God did not take work away from humankind, he stood by his plan of work as a gift of grace. I appreciate too that all of us need a break from work and the opportunity for rest and re-creation. But I want to proclaim that in our work we are serving God and fulfilling much of what he wants from us.

This was recognised by the Reformers who sought to 'revalue' the work of the laity, Luther famously emphasising that each person should regard their work as a calling of equal value. 'If we viewed the world aright the entire world would be full of service to God, not only the churches, but also the home, the kitchen, the cellar, the workshop, and the field of the townsfolk and farmers.'

My point is that whilst the pressures of work today may lead us to dream of more rest time, we should as well be seeking to reclaim the view that work is a blessing from God. Mark Greene of The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity has introduced the concept that all Christians are Full Time Christian Workers and I think he is right to keep on emphasising this. We all need to embrace our work as an opportunity to serve God, not as a burden to be avoided. We need to welcome the freedom of expression and fitness that enables us to work and we need to recognise the privileges that we enjoy because of our work.

By all means let's rest (and work to ensure others enjoy their rest), but let us also recognise that our work is a gift of grace from a loving God to enable us to express our humanity and our spirituality in new ways. ■

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