

**SERMON PREACHED ON  
INDEPENDENCE SUPER SUNDAY**

**By:**

**Bishop Simeon B. Hall  
New Covenant Baptist Church  
Sunday, July 10, 2005**

Scripture Text: 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:9-12

*“But touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.”*

Colossians 3:23

*“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”*

Subject:

**“WHO YOU WORKIN’ FOR?”**

The subject today is taken from the popular song “**Civil Servant**” by K.B.

I made it a point to speak to Mr. K. B. several times in the past two weeks. His proper name is Kirkland Bodie and he has a knack for placing his finger on things Bahamian.

The lyrics, the rhyme and the tone of Mr. Bodie's song all resonate so well with that area of life common to us all, **work.**

**Work** that is human activity, with which even God the Creator, is familiar.

After listening to K.B's song a person is forced to look inward, and then outward.

What about our work habits as a people and what is the relationship of worship to our work? What are the religious implications of work?

Are we afraid of the rest of the Caribbean because of our bad work habits?

My brothers and sisters, all work fall into three categories.

- There is mental work.
- There is spiritual work.
- And then there is physical work.

In which of these three areas do you excel?

Mental, physical or spiritual work?

Are you best at mental labor? Are you a thinker?

Do you make time to expand your spirit and inner self or are you better with manual labor?

The point of this sermon today is that, generally speaking, almost all work honors God.

Every legitimate work has significance in the eyes of God.

I believe it is important for the Church to re-baptize work as it were, so that people everywhere will come to see that our worship of God colors and influences all areas of life, even our work life.

Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer states that to wash dishes and to read the Bible are two different things, but as it relates to their capacity to please God, there is fundamentally no difference.

When a man works on a legitimate enterprise to provide for his own needs and that of society; or when a man works and promotes the common good; then that man honors God as he uses the skills, talents, gifts and strength God has given him to the glory of God and the upliftment of all around him.

A clear and deeper understanding of what the whole Bible teaches is the point made that God expects His priest to be faithful and sanctified and equally so He expects the farmer to be diligent and judicious.

The pursuit of excellence is a spiritual goal even if those who engage in it recognize it or not.

Make no mistake, the Bible condemns laziness.

Read the wisdom literature of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and note that spiritual, mental and physical slothfulness find no comfort or blessing in God's Word.

**“Go to the ant thou sluggard”, and “if a man does not work let him not eat bread”.** Such are the strong admonition resounding in the Scripture. These and so many more speak against laziness as repugnant to God's ideal for us.

Theologians agree, that work that is morally legitimate is also morally good and when done with good motives, leads to social responsibility and is therefore necessary for a stable society.

Work is the means which God has ordained for the meeting of human needs.

Even those Christians who await a **workless heaven** or a paradise where you sit around drinking milk and honey all day are in for a rude awakening. In heaven, I believe the

drudgery of work will be gone but there will be delightful activity in heaven for the redeemed.

Brothers and sisters, the gradual demise of the work ethic in Bahamian society is a direct result of the loss of a spiritual centre in our personal life.

Too many Bahamians have a low view of work because they have an erroneous view of worship. Too many Bahamians refuse to spiritualize **their work week** because their **worship day** has no meaning.

A high and lofty sense of worship leads to a higher appreciation of duty and work.

The more we recognize God for who He is on Sunday, the better citizens we would become Monday to Saturday. Christian worship should impact human workmanship.

A person's awareness of the presence of God will be manifested in the practical and human issues of one's life.

After Isaiah saw the Lord, when the question was asked, “**who will go?**” He responded, “**Send me**”.

Cain and Abel had a bad experience at worship so they fell while out at work?

In the Garden of Eden two brothers had a broken experience around the altar so murder happened in the field. What we do in Church must influence positively who we are and how we see each other in the market place.

Whenever sin abounds the bad spirit of **something for nothing** increases. The Christian Church is in error when it gives too much emphasis to material things and fuels the spirit of getting something for nothing.

Meaningful rewarding work is a fundamental dimension of human existence. If more people would see their work as honoring God, can you imagine how our attitude to work would change for the better?

Gainful and meaningful employment lends weight to inner peace and strengthens our self-worth, personal image and self-esteem.

It is worth repeating as William Tyndale has stated, “A milkmaid working a cow can glorify God when she does what she does to serve and assist other human-beings”.

The author Albert Hubbard notes that the greatest reward God gives us for a great job is the ability **to do that job even better.**

William Faulkner in his book “**Future Shock**” tells us it is sad but true that work is one of the few things you can do for 8 hours a day.

You can't eat for 8 hours,

You can't drink for 8 hours,

You can't have sex for 8 hours,

But you can work.

If we continue to lose our sense and high regard for honorable work we will become a weak nation, a poor nation and an unhappy people.

Work is honorable but we must forever keep in perspective **who we are working for.**

Under normal circumstances you work for your family, you work to build your country and you work to honor God.

Did you hear about the man who found a bottle on a beach? In the bottle was a genie. The genie gave him three wishes. The last wish was, I wish I could have a job where I don't **have to work.** Ten seconds later he awakes and he was sitting at a desk in a Government office.

Of course some Civil Servants will have to take exception to that bit of humor, but we all must strive to bring excellence and competence to our work ethic.

The fact that we have so many Churches and Bahamians are a Church-going people, and the fact that so many of us have bad work habits; these two don't go together.

In this age of globalization and in the context of regionalization what a nation does and what it may achieve depends to a large degree on the work habit of its general work force.

Recently, the Bahamas has opted not to participate in the **Caribbean Single Market Economy** at this time, and it appears that the majority of Bahamians support that position, but it may be that one reason we might find it difficult to compete with other regional nations is because too many Bahamians are too lazy; too many want something for nothing, and we are so blessed with material things, we are spoiled rotten.

Worship has social implications.

Worship influences work and your sense of duty comes from your awareness of God who supplies the **native** strength for you to do all things.

**How a people view their work habits in a community is inextricably tied to how that community sees itself in the providence of Almighty God.**

Young people let me challenge you, don't mind the crowd, try to cultivate your latent ability to be a hardworking, honest, spiritual individual.

Education is a major key to open doors. Get a good education. Learn all you can. Set high ideals and fix noble priorities.

Young man when you go for a job it will not matter to the employer that the Junkanoo group for which you rushed came second in the "A" Class. Nor, young lady will it count that you won the best dressed couple at the school prom.

And please remember a "D" is a "D" is a "D" and copying is still copying regardless of who says different.

Every Bahamian should live and work in a manner that your country can be as proud of you as you are of it. This country gave you birth. Now you must give it excellence.

My mother, God bless her spirit; used to say to us, **“you don’t have to be rich to have pride and you don’t have to be educated to have good manners”**.

My mother used to say, **“What you wear cannot and never will replace who you are”**.

Mama used to say, **“It is stupid to put a five dollar hair cut on a ten cent brain”**.

What we do individually is tied into what God is doing to and with us collectively.

**Please remember, God will help you with your dreams but you’ve got to wake up and work to achieve them.**

The blessings the Bahamas now enjoys are so many and varied that often we are apt to become laid back, lethargic and self-indulgent.

Often when a people become too self indulgent God will use a national crises to shake them to their senses.

Do you think some Bahamians would change their work habits if they knew there were 20,000 persons outside waiting to take their jobs?

The Christian Church in the Bahamian context has erred in going too far in the compartmentalization of the sacred and secular vocations. What if we gave God a thirty- day vacation from our Churches and let Him reside in our market place?

What if we were to be as nice, congenial and loving to one another on the job as we are in the Church?

What if we were to ask God to sit in one of our House of Assembly meetings?

What if we ask God to spend the weekend at our house?

The irony in these questions are obvious, if we are Christian God's spirit should be with us wherever we go.

Work done to help people is sacred.

Work done to make people live better, is sacred.

Work done to lift life's burden is sacred.

The high principles which the Church proclaims and the high qualities which businesses search for are the same.

When **Forbes Magazine** in its February Issue listed the seven top qualities business houses look for in employees, it posted the following:

- **Competence**
- **Industriousness**
- **Honesty**
- **Respect for others**
- **Resourceful**

And making the list was, they wanted persons whose personal habits and lifestyles show some degree of stability.

Many of the major corporations of the world are now looking at persons with good family life.

Is that not amazing?

Look at these qualities and take note that these are all common Christian qualities, underscored throughout the scripture as virtues, gifts and fruits which are normal outgrowth of a Christian life.

Christians should go to work and work hard to make God's Kingdom come and His will done on earth as it is being done in Heaven.

Let's not leave God in Church.

Let's take Him to work with us.

Let's let Him ride with us on the jitney; tell Him He will have to buckle up, but let's take Him with us.

Good Christians should make good workers, but the report is, this is sadly not always the case.

Taking your Christianity to work has nothing to do with how often you read the Bible, but how you are competent and honest on your job.

It is not sufficient to list your denomination. It is not enough to say you belong to this or that Church. The more poignant question is, **“does your life and work speak of your place in the Kingdom of God?”**

Are you industrious and loyal?

Are you, as a worker, respectful of others?

Are you resourceful?

And do you evidence that your personal life is reasonably together?

Do you not find that interesting?

The highest ideals that business places look for in their everyday workers are the same high ideals espoused by the Christian Church.

Sometimes as Pastor I am asked by a Christian about the job they have, should they remain employed in certain jobs?

My answer is usually very simple, does your job requires you to violate anything your Christian teaching has clearly taught you not to do?

Does your job produce things which by nature are immoral or causes harm to others?

Does your job demand so much of you that other parts of your life are neglected?

Your work should enhance your self-worth not diminish it.

Two more points and I shall conclude.

On the occasion of our Nation's Independence it is appropriate to say: **“Good work should be rewarded with good pay. One hundred and fifty dollars per week as a minimum wage contributes to the already low morale of some Bahamian workers. No Bahamian in today's multi-billion dollar Bahamas should be forced to live on \$150.00 per week.”**

Let those who are at the lowest level of society, do what they can to better themselves and let those who hold the public purse make it possible for others to have a little more.

The true growth of any country is not how many millionaires it makes **richer**, but how many poor people it lifts to a state of social and personal normalcy.

As we stand today and look where God has brought us from it must be said, if we could put out the red carpet for Expatriates, then we should cut the red tape for all Bahamians.

Listen to Colossians 3:23

*“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”*

Or listen to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:9

*“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”*

A final point, if this was all we could say, we would fail as a Church. There is another word to these words.

It is of the utmost importance that we remember that we are laborers together with God.

Work is not to be idolized, but the God who gives us strength to work, we should worship Him with all our heart, mind and soul.

Work was made for man not man for work.

But man was a worshipper before he became a worker.

Just as God rested from His labor you and I must make time for rest, respite and worship.

Let this word ring out across this archipelagic nation.

Let every Bahamian go forth with a new attitude towards work.

It is because I love God, my country and my family that I will work.

My work honors the God I serve.

Who you working for?

Let the artisans and architects answer this question, with new resolve, who you working for?

Let the builders, and construction workers all answer the question with a new attitude.

Let the busboy, the maid and the hotel manager come to see who he is working for.

Let the Policeman, the Immigration and Defence Force Officers join in the chorus, our work is essential for nation builders.

Let the Banker, the Lawyer, the doctors and the Accountants all do their work with an awareness that heaven is watching and the poor is waiting.

Let every Politician, regardless of the temporary badge he now wears, let everyone work with an awareness that what is done for and to the people of God, honors God.

For we are all laborers together with Him.

Let us be more nationalistic than political.

Do not be a P.L.P. worker or an F.N.M. worker, but be a Bahamian worker.

God gives us this land, **all of we is one** and if you born there, you born there!!

If it is your job to **sweep streets**, be the best **street** sweeper in town. **Sweep streets** like **Timothy Gibson** knew music.

**Sweep streets** like **Eddie Minnis** knew poetry.

**Sweep streets** like **Tonique Williams-Darling** runs the 400.

**Sweep streets** like **Pindling** knew politics.

**Sweep streets** like **Nola baked Crabs**.

**Sweep streets** like Brent Malone painted pictures.

**Sweep streets** like A. S. Colebrooke preached sermons.

The work you do today, religious or secular, shapes the Bahamas of tomorrow.

Who you working for? You are working not for man but to hear God say well done.

And so whatever your work, your profession or your calling be the best whatever you are.

Yes, if you can't be a pine on the top of the hill  
Be a scrub in the valley,  
But be the best little scrub by the side of the hill.  
Be a bush if you can't be a tree.

If you can't be a bush, be a bit of the grass,  
Some highway happier make;  
If you can't be a muskie, then just be a bass,  
Be the liveliest bass in the lake.

If you can't be a highway, then just be a trail  
If you can't be the sun, be a star.  
It isn't by side that you win or you fail  
Be the best of whatever you are!

In my boyhood days, in another time and place, they use to  
say...

**“So drive the nail a right boy  
Hit it on the head  
Strike with all your might boy  
While the iron's red.**

**When you've got work to do boy  
Do it with a will  
They who reach the top, boy  
First must climb the hill.**

**Standing at the foot boy  
Gazing at the sky  
How can you get up boy  
If you never try.**

**Though you stumble oft boy  
Never be downcast  
Try and try again boy  
You'll succeed at last".**