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Undercover Boss: I Hate My Job

Mark 14: 32-42

What is the worst job you've ever had?

There have been a lot of jobs I've done. I've been a trash man, mowed lawns, dug ditches... I've even buffed office telephones until they looked good enough to sell again. And none of those jobs did I hate, actually. I was always pretty engaged in what I did. But there was one job I really did hate. And that was being a cashier at Safeway. There was nothing more mind-numbing, more soul-sucking for me, than standing in place for 8 hours a day getting repetitive strain injuries from scanning over and over and over and over. And the people, oh the people! Too many of them! I started as a cashier when I was 18, and I wasn't as high-functioning of an introvert as I am now, so it was nerve wracking to be faced with the prospect of having to engage in conversation over and over again. I hated that job. I dreaded just about every day I had to come in to do it.

Maybe some of you are thinking that way about the job you're in right now. Maybe you're a cashier! But we've probably all experienced a job you just can't stand. In fact, Gallup did an extensive poll about job satisfaction in America and found that in 2013 about 70% of the American workforce was what they called "disengaged" from their job. That means that statistically speaking, about 70% of this church hates their job, to some degree. You might not think of your job in terms of hate, but I would say that even if you are just apathetic about your work, you hate your job. Apathy can be the purest form of hate.

So this is a big problem! As I was doing research for this sermon I found no shortage of articles on the internet about what to do if you hate your job... plenty of top ten lists on what to do if you hate your job. I read one that said you should imagine yourself inside a giant protective egg shell every day you walk into work. That sounds like a great idea! Well, don't worry, I don't want you to walk away this morning with a self-help list of the ten things to do if you hate your job. I want you to walk away with Jesus.

If you've been here through this series we have called *Undercover Boss* then you'll know that we have been learning from Jesus what it means to work. Earlier, we came up with a Biblical definition of work. Does anyone remember what it is? *Doing something with what God has given you so that the world thrives and Jesus is glorified.* But what does that look like? We can say that at a theoretical level, but

day in day out, what does that mean? So we talked about what it means to lead and to serve, which as it turns out is all the same thing in Jesus' eyes. We talked about how to live this out if you're retired or disabled. What does work mean then? And last week Pastor Mark shared on how we deal with the Rat Race as followers of Jesus: comparison, consumption, chaos. And every step of the way, we have been sitting at the feet of Jesus, learning from the ultimate Undercover Boss how to work his way in the world. Who would have thought a 2,000 year old Jewish rabbi had something to say about how we do work today, but he does.

So when potentially 70% of this church is faced with job dissatisfaction, where do we turn for help? Internet top ten lists? Or Jesus? I'm going for Jesus too.

This morning we're going to return to the Gospel of Mark. This time we'll be reading a passage from close to the end of Jesus' ministry, immediately after he has the Last Supper with his disciples. We're going to read the passage, then talk a little about the passage so we can really understand what Jesus is going through. Then we're going to apply how Jesus dealt with his situation to our own lives. Why am I spelling this out for you? Because I want to remind us that we're not just reading about Jesus' disciples, we are his disciples. And a disciple is one who listens, watches, and learns from their master. This morning let's learn from the Master of Life, who is still alive and with us today.

Mark 14:32-42

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer."

This is the Word of the Lord.

This is a bleak passage, isn't it? This passage is thick with the theme of betrayal and abandonment. Moments before the garden, Jesus has had his Last Supper with his disciple and there he tells them,

vs. 18 "One of you will betray me - one who is eating with me."

Can you imagine, knowing that you are eating with someone who is plotting your death? Then moments later he tells them that not only will one of them betray him, but all of them will abandon him. Peter denies it, says, "Never!" But Jesus knows better. He knows that he will be betrayed and abandoned that night.

You know, we talk about job dissatisfaction, but I guess that few of us have been in a place as dark as this. And if anybody had a right to be dissatisfied with what they were doing for a living, it had to be Jesus.

In fact, when we see Jesus disturbed, we are disturbed too. We expect the Jesus to be composed, ready to take anything on. But he's not, he's in agony, he's distressed, he's a human being! And that's a good thing because it means that God can relate to us, and we can relate to him. We can learn from God how to be a human being, we can learn from God how to deal with a job we hate.

I think that there are two things we can watch and learn from Jesus in his humanity. Jesus was like a man on a mission. And Jesus was like a child with his Father.

Jesus was a man who knew his mission. It might seem odd to say that Jesus had a job, but it's true. He says in John 5:17,

"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."

What was the work of Jesus? Simply, it was to usher in the Kingdom of God. As he was going around and making blind eyes see, and restoring the poor, he was demonstrating what the Kingdom of God looked like. But to finish that work, he knew he needed to die, he knew the cost. But he was resolute in his mission. In the Gospel of Luke it says he "set his face like flint" towards Jerusalem to see that accomplished.

Jesus knows exactly what his job is. He knows the "why?" of what he is doing. In other words, he is motivated. Even if his job is harder than ever, he gets why he is doing it. But Jesus also knows who he is: a child speaking to his Father.

Just notice the words of his prayer. The first thing we notice about this prayer are the opening words, "Abba, Father." Abba means "daddy" in Aramaic. These are words of trust. They're the words of a child reaching out to hold the hand of their daddy. And this trust is implicit in the rest of Jesus prayer. "Everything is possible for you, daddy. Take this cup from me, daddy. Yet not what I will, but what you

will, daddy." Even in the agony of the moment, Jesus does not doubt the power and love of the Father.

But he does depend on it. Because he trusts his Father he seeks his help. "Father, take this cup from me." He knew that his Father was good and powerful, and that if there was another better way God would have it for him. And he wasn't afraid to ask for it as a little child. He seeks his Father's will. "Yet not my will, but your will be done." Since he knows that the will of the Father is good and he submits himself fully to that will.

So Jesus is resolute in his mission, but he trusts his Father like a child in that mission.

That's how Jesus deals with his job, how about you? What can the 70% of Americans who hate their job learn from Jesus?

Well, first I want to ask you, do you know what your job is? Now, I'm not asking if you're a doctor, or a cashier, or a dump truck driver, I'm asking you if you know what your mission is. Do you know why you are doing what you are doing?

You see, you could technically say that Jesus was just a rabbi, or just a carpenter before that, but as I mentioned earlier Jesus was driven by his mission, which was to usher in the Kingdom of God. Now I could spend a lot of time talking about the Kingdom of God, because Jesus talked a lot about the Kingdom of God, and I wish I had that time, but I actually think we've been talking about it a lot without calling it that, per se.

Do you remember our definition of work? I know for many of you that has already reinvigorated your job space. I really believe that when you saw your work in this light you were actually participating in the mission of ushering the Kingdom of God. Think about it, when Jesus did his work of healing, preaching, and ultimately of dying on the cross, wasn't he doing something with what God had given him to make the world thrive and Himself glorified? Our definition of work and the mission of Jesus to usher in the Kingdom are one and the same.

There are probably a ton of different motivations for working represented in this room. Maybe your motivation is making money. Maybe it's

- to provide for your kids,
- to build up towards retirement,
- to have a successful career, whatever.

All of these are fine things, but when

- you aren't recognized by your boss,
- when you don't find meaning in your work,
- when you don't get enough breaks or vacation,
- when you don't like your co-workers,
- when you're faced with an unethical situation,

are those motives going to be enough?

Knowing your mission won't change your situation. But it could change you. When you say my job is not just to make benefits, or build a successful career, but to do something with what God has given me so that the world thrives and Jesus is glorified, you begin following in Jesus' footsteps. You become one of his disciples. Instead of just being a cashier working for Safeway, you become an agent of the Kingdom working for God himself. You become part of a bigger story, a bigger mission, and that can make all the difference in the world. Jesus knew his mission, and it was the basis upon which he could bear the agony of the garden, and it can be the basis by which we bear our tough work situations.

Why we do our work matters. It also matters who we see ourselves as when we do our work.

You know sometimes I think we can feel like we are in a job we hate because God is punishing us, or because he's neglecting us. But if you remember that even Jesus, the son of God, was in a place where it was clear he was uncomfortable, maybe he might call us to do so too. The key being that Jesus knew as a child of God that his Father might have a purpose to his pain, that this was the way God would have him accomplish his mission. And as a child of the Father he could trust him in that. We too can trust the Father as a child and know that he sometimes calls us into difficult or painful or boring places, so that the world thrives and Jesus is glorified.

Even though Jesus trusted his Father, he did not leave his Father's will up to the imagination. He sought that will and he sought help to do that will. You see, I can't tell you for sure whether the Father would have you be in your crummy job or not. You must reach out for the Father's hand and discern his will, to seek out his help as a child of the Father, to ask, "Father remove this job from me. But not my will, your will be done."

Do you see yourself as a child of the Father? Or do you see yourself as an orphan, abandoned to face how you're going to deal with this job you hate?

If you are a child of the Father, then you will find that you have what you need to accomplish the Kingdom mission the Father has given you in whatever job you may have.

I'm emphatic that knowing your mission and seeing yourself as a child of the Father will make every difference in your job, whether you hate it or not, because I know it has made a huge difference for me. I got to prove that for myself not too long ago.

Remember, being a cashier is probably the only job I've truly hated. But recently I got a chance to be a cashier again, and I was surprised by the experience. Before the Men's Mexico trip there was a fundraising opportunity, a chance to work at the

Rainier's game to raise money for the trip. It didn't cross my mind that if I did it I would be a cashier. Lo and behold, that is exactly where I ended up, behind the dreaded register. But about halfway through the night, I realized that I'm a better cashier than I was 14 years ago. I realized it when I got yelled at because somebody's hot dog was too crumbly and dry. I realized it when one of my customers angrily impatient about their order. I realized it when someone told me we were woefully understaffed that night. About 14 years ago, those situations would have made me say, I hate my job. But this time, I saw what my job was, really. And I knew I wasn't alone, but my Father was there with me. And I knew that how I reacted to those customers made all the difference with how my little corner of the world thrived and Jesus was glorified. I was a better cashier because I was a better disciple.

Maybe 70% of you do hate your jobs. Maybe none of you do, though I doubt it. But really, it doesn't matter if you hate your job or not. Being on mission and being a child of the Father will make your job better no matter what. It won't change your circumstances, but it will change you.

I want us to do a little exercise this morning to practice being Jesus' disciples, to imitate his prayer in the garden.

Sermon Questions

- **REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER:** Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.
- **PRAY TOGETHER:** Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.
- **DIG DEEPER**
 1. 1. What do you think was the most important point in the sermon? Why is it important?
 2. What other reflections do you have about the sermon by Pastor Larry?
 3. How do you think the sermon applies to us as a congregation?
 4. What is it that God wants you to do as a result of hearing this sermon?