



“The Spirit-Filled Work Ethic”

Colossians 3:22-4:1

June 5, 2022

This morning the Word of God is going to speak into our lives about the way that we go about our work. All through the week I have been reflecting upon all of the different occupations done by the people of Bethel Grace. As you might expect, there is quite a diversity of occupations.

Some of you work as admissions counselors, and others as engineers. There is at least one coffee barista. There are law enforcement officers, port workers, educators, nurses, electricians, graphic designers, construction workers, retail clerks, contractors, office workers, office managers, pastors, students, household managers at home.

The list goes on and on and on. There are so many different kinds of work being done here among the people of Bethel Grace. But for all the different kinds of employment there are, there is something that you all hold in common. There is something that is the same for each and every one of you. This remains the case even if you are retired. **We all have the same boss!**

So whether it is out in the work force or in the home or in the volunteer community or the service you render here at Bethel Grace, we are doing your work, when filled with the Spirit, for Jesus Christ the Lord.

The old bumper sticker is true: your boss *is* a Jewish carpenter—or at least at one time He was a carpenter. We are to go about the work that we do throughout the week in the same way that Jesus went about that carpentry work. We are to do so with a Spirit-filled work ethic, knowing that the Lord is at work not only redeeming sinners, but redeeming all aspects of our lives, that we might glorify Him and that we may reflect His grace.

We will see this as we once again look into the great chapter on the new life that believers have in Christ. This is a theme that runs all throughout Colossians Chapter 3, and that is the great doctrine of regeneration. By the grace of God, sinners are born again, raised spiritually as they look forward the great physical resurrection that is going to come at the return of Christ.

We are raised up to newness of life. In keeping with that, we put off the old and we put on the new. So in relation to the work that we do, we put off laziness and resentment and we put on diligence and purpose. If we do our work as bosses or overseers, then we are to put off forcefulness and we put on righteousness, doing that kind of work for the One who is ultimately the boss, Jesus.

The risen life of Christ touches all aspects of life, even including the ways that we go about our work through the days of our lives. This is what we will see this morning as Paul addressed bondservants and household masters in the First Century world. As he addressed them in the households of Colossae, we will see just who we are working for.

We are working for the same One they were working for. Therefore, we will see how we are to go about the work that we do with the perspective that Jesus brings us.

Let's look at what is here for us in Colossians Chapter 3 and Verse 22 through Chapter 4 and Verse 1:

**<sup>22</sup>Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.**

**<sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup>For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.**

**<sup>1</sup>Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.**

Amen and may the Lord bless the reading of His Word.

Before we get into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century application of the words that we just read, let me acknowledge that a portion of Scripture like this does in fact raise questions in our minds . Perhaps first among those questions are: who are these bondservants and who were the masters? And if in fact these bondservants were 1<sup>st</sup> Century slaves in the Roman world, why did Paul teach them simply to obey their masters, and why didn't he teach the masters to just release them immediately?

We will go into historical detail about this crucial topic of slavery when we get into the book of Philemon this summer. The book of Philemon is a companion to the book of Colossians, being written to a man who was a member of the Colossian church named Philemon.

Philemon had a slave by the name of Onesimus. It is evident that Onesimus stole from Philemon and he ran away. And by the providence of God, Onesimus encountered the Apostle Paul. Onesimus got saved and then Paul sent him back with Tychicus, the mailman, and urged Philemon to receive him back as a brother in the Christ.

For now however, it is estimated that about twenty to thirty percent of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves, so we are talking about tens and tens of millions of people. For the most part, they were taken into slavery when the Romans armies would go out and conquer nations and bring back prisoners and captives of all ethnicities.

Those captives would become slaves in the Roman Empire and they did all kinds of labor. Some did manual. Some did the kind of work that we would identify as white-collar professional work. So there were all kinds of work that the slaves did. As we see how Paul dealt with it here in this text and in related portions of Scripture, we must understand what a vast presence slavery was in the Roman Empire.

Further, we have to understand that societal reform was not the focal point of Paul's calling. Paul was a leader in a small Jewish sect that was under the frown of the Roman Empire; that was being persecuted and he was not in a position to overturn that massive societal institution. Paul's calling was to go and proclaim the Gospel and to proclaim the message of eternal salvation to all human beings, whatever their station in life was.

Further, Paul taught them how to live for Christ whatever lot in life they found themselves in. This is what we see as Paul's focal point. It was preaching the Gospel and bringing people by the grace of God into everlasting and newness of life.

That being the case, as we read how Paul interacted with the issue of slavery in the Roman world, he did not come with a big chainsaw, cutting down the massive tree of Roman slavery in that First Century world. Rather, Paul released wonderful termites into the wood. So that his teaching would get into the structure and pretty soon, wherever the Word of God was taken seriously, the structure would fall. That is how Paul addressed it.

We saw this earlier in Colossians Chapter 3 and Verse 11, as Paul spoke to the church of God; the people that belonged to Jesus, telling them to put off the old and put on the new. He gave them a new vision with which they would look at every single person that was round them. Paul said:

**<sup>11</sup>Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.**

Masters, Christ is in the person that is serving as a slave in your household. You better take that seriously. That is how Paul was addressing them. And a little bit later in this morning's message, when Paul gave the direct instructions to those household owners and masters, more termites into the wood!

But as for now, we will deal with what is here in this text. Paul wanted all who belonged to Christ to do their work well; to do their work before the Lord. Understand that here in the context of Colossians Chapter 3, Paul was dealing with the church and believing households.

Did you notice that this is in the midst of what is sometimes referred to as the "household table," or the "household codes." He had dealt with wives and husband. He had dealt with children and parents. Then he dealt with bondservants and masters. So for all of the different kinds of occupations and work that slaves did in the Roman world, Paul was talking about those who were sharing a home together.

While there are differences, this might be kind of the same: I remember there was T.V. show back in the day that I used to watch called "The Brady Bunch." There with Brady family was a woman housekeeper named Alice. She was very personally known by the Brady Bunch.

In the words of a pastor by the name of Sam Storms, “It would be a mistake to think that there is a one to one correspondence between the slave master relationship in the First Century and the employee-employer relationship today. Still there are spiritual and ethical truths that shape Paul’s counsel to both parties, and these principles have their application today.”

As we see how Paul was instructing these believers how to do their work then, we glean instruction in how we are to do our work now. God worked in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2, didn’t He? Six days of creation and then on the seventh day, He rested from the work that He had done. Then He created Adam and Eve and they were to do the work of tending the wonderful garden that was going to be the ground zero for the temple of God on earth. You can go back to the messages on Genesis if you would like to review all of that.

So understand that work is pre-curse. Work is good. While we praise God first and foremost that He redeems sinners like us, bringing us into eternal salvation and into an eternal Kingdom, He is also redeeming the way that we go about the work that we do. What we need to see first of all is that Jesus is the Boss.

We are working for Jesus. If there is nothing else that gets impressed on us as we go about our affairs through the week, I want it to be that. Get that burned in the frontal lobe of your brain. You are serving the Lord Christ. Where are the teachers? You are serving the Lord Christ. Where are the engineers? You are serving Christ. Christ is the boss. Christ is the Master.

When you are raised to life in Jesus, even the way that you go about your work throughout the week is going to be empowered by the Spirit of Jesus, who raised your dead soul to life, as you are calling upon Him, saying, “Lord, help me not to stiffen my neck, but to go with the flow of the Holy Spirit.” So, I pray that it will be our renewed desire through all of the different occupations, that we will do so as unto the Lord, because that is what is given to us in the text.

So understanding that Jesus who purchased us by His blood has the ultimate claim upon our lives, the question becomes this: if you really believe that, how are you going to conduct yourself to the customer that is absolutely driving you nuts and dancing on your last nerve? How are you going to respond to the list of demands given by the supervisor? How are you going to find motivation if you have little supervision from a boss who seems very, very distant?

We can ask so many different questions but what we have to keep in mind what it says in Verse 24:

**<sup>24</sup>...You are serving the Lord Christ.**

So with this in view, let’s look at what is here. Let’s pray that God will renew us and fill us with grace in the power of the Holy Spirit that we might work through the week as those who are renewed in Him.

I have three aspects of this Spirit-filled work ethic that I want to share with you this morning from the text we have before us today. First,

## The Spirit-Filled Work Ethic

### 1. Comprehensive Obedience (3:22)

Do what your boss tells you to do. Verse 22:

**<sup>22</sup>Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.**

Look at how that begins. Bondservants, employees, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, knowing that they are just your earthly masters, and that there is another Heavenly Master that you are rendering that service unto. But obey in everything.

Just like we learned last week, this word for obey has the nuance of hearing. We need to say, “Lord, open my ears to what I am called to do. Let me hear the instruction and let me do it by the power of Your grace.” We are to listen to instruction and carry it out in every detail. This is what we are being called to do here.

Now, once again, understand that this is in the context of Christian households. So we can understand Paul went on the idea that they would be instructed to do work that was in keeping with what Christian masters would call them to do.

This is not talking about things that are sinful. If your boss tell you to do something sinful, don’t do what your boss tells you to do because you are serving Jesus Christ. If you’re an accountant and your boss tells you to cheat on the books, don’t cheat on the books. You are serving Jesus Christ.

In some fancy corporation, your boss tells you that you are going to give some kind of hospitality to people from another corporation by taking them into some dark club where sexually sinful things happen. You will not go. You are serving Jesus Christ. So you don’t follow the instruction of authorities to sin, because God is the ultimate authority and you obey His Word in the power of the Spirit.

But insofar as instructions are not sinful, the teaching is to get the job done and get it done thoroughly, not half-heartedly. But do it in a way that is energetic. Go above and beyond. Be the kind of employee that goes the extra mile. If it is your responsibility to sweep the floor, don’t just sweep in a halfway approach, leaving the part under the sink that you think nobody will see. You sweep under the sink and desk too.

Do the work thoroughly! If it is your job to write a report, don’t fudge on all of the details but search out the facts to the best of your ability and write an accurate report. This kind of work ethic is what we are talking about.

Notice what else Paul said here about comprehensive obedience. Paul also said :

**<sup>22</sup>...not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.**

That is a unique phrase and those who are scholars in the Greek language would say that this is really unique to the point that they think Paul coined this phrase.

What Paul meant by “not by way of eye-service “ is to not ramp up your efforts when the boss is present and work hard then. Don’t crank up the production when you know others are watching. Rather, crank up the production all the time, knowing that Jesus, your real boss, is watching and you are doing the work unto Him.

Back in the Old Testament there was woman named Hagar and her child, Ishmail. She understood that God is El Roi. That name meaning the God who sees. This is our Lord. This is Jesus. He is the unseen boss who sees all. You are serving Him, so pay attention to the details. You do your work in your occupation how Jesus might have done His work as a carpenter. This is what we are called to do, and this is what the redeeming of the grace of God is working to do in us.

As we think about this, we must stop and recognize that there is a tendency in fallen people like us—even those who have been born again and who are still dealing with the remnants of the sinful nature—to only do as much work as we have to do. We do enough to get by and to avoid a reprimand.

The result is widespread mediocrity at best, and poor performance at worse. Sometimes it goes to flat out laziness. By way of example, there is a television show called Seinfeld. I saw an episode of it recently. There is a man in that show named George Costanza who worked for the New York Yankees.

What he found in his office job is that there was room underneath his desk to construct some kind of makeshift cot, where he could sleep when nobody was watching. Costanza worked for George Stienbrenner, the then owner of the Yankees.

One time he was under his desk sleeping when Stienbrenner came in because he wanted to talk to George Costanza. George apparently was not there, so Stienbrenner had to wait and wait, wondering where Costanza was. They both were determined to wait for each other out, so Costanza had Jerry call in a bomb threat.

Hopefully, that is rare but there is something in so many of us that wants to slough things off. The Proverbs calls it being a sluggard. That is a tendency of the sin nature, and Jesus is saying, “Hey, rise up and live and work hard and find a purpose in it!”

Now understand that in the text before us, we are seeing the Law of the Lord given forth. Those who work are to work with diligence not just when the boss is watching, but they are to work with diligence all the time. I think that pretty much all of us will have to acknowledge that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

So as the will of the Lord is spoken into our lives and we see the standard that Jesus gives, we must go to the Lord and say, “Father, my hands have been lazy. You have spoken Your Word. I confess my sin and I repent.”

This passage of Scripture takes you to the foot of the cross, where you can find forgiveness from Jesus to wash away your sin. Not only the sins of commission, but also of omission, not doing the things you are supposed to do. You will find grace there as you acknowledge your sin.

Take it to Jesus and find grace. Understand that these kind of commands take us not only to the cross, but they also take us the empty grave, where we are reminded of the power that Jesus wants to give us in the everyday affairs of life.

This is the first principle of this work ethic that is to characterize those raised up in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. I pray that even as we hear the will of the Lord, the Holy Spirit will trigger within our hearts desire to work hard, knowing that hard work was pre-fall and will go forward into eternity. In Revelation Chapter 22, we are called servants of the Lord.

Comprehensive obedience is the first aspect of the Spirit-filled work ethic. Here the second:

## **2. Inward Desire (3:22-23)**

We work with inward desire, to do work well. Verse 22:

**<sup>22</sup>Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.**

**<sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men**

Do you see the emphasis in this text on the internal condition as we go about the work that we are called to do? It is there twice in this text. In Verse 22 it says “with sincerity of heart.” And we are to “work heartily” in Verse 23.

In Verse 22 it is the word *kardia*. You might know of cardiac conditions. From the heart. Work with sincerity of heart. But then in Verse 23, where it says, “work heartily,” that is actually the word *psucha*, which is soul.

In the First Century mind, which needs to be our minds too, the heart was the entire inward condition. That is why it is translated the way that it is. But a literal rendering would be: work with sincerity from the heart and work from the soul. Have you ever heard of the phrase heart and soul? Both words are here in this text. Work heart and soul. This is the will of the Lord given for us. Work from within!

Verse 22 says to do this *fearing the Lord*. This language of fearing the Lord is often used in the context of sacred worship. Guess what? Your work is sacred worship. If you are one born again, and sanctified, and a part by God, work is worship. We do it in His power to the Glory of His Name.

Once again, the mirror of God's Law is placed before us. This is talking about inward desire now. I wonder how many people and how many of us would say, "If I am being honest, I hate the work that I do. Sometimes I don't have much higher sentiment about the people that I am working for. I get so frustrated and fed up!" This is just telling me to work from the heart. Work from the inward condition.

Pop quiz. Today is a holiday. What holiday is it? Pentecost! What is recognized and celebrated on Pentecost? The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, not only upon the church of God, but within each person that is a Christian—the Holy Spirit coming within, bringing newness.

As we remember that the great momentous time of Pentecost has come and that we are living in the new covenant age, let's be reminded of the great prophecy of the new covenant and the gift of the Holy Spirit that was given to Israel and then to us in an ongoing relevance through the prophet Ezekiel.

This is the Word of the Lord speaking to us from Ezekiel Chapter 36 and Verses 25 through 27:

**<sup>25</sup>I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup>And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**

This is the new covenant promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who has power to transform our desires. In view of the work that we are doing, we need pray, "Spirit, I need You to work inside of me and to see how every day gives me opportunities to glorify Your Son, who is my boss."

I remember an awesome story in John Chapter 4 about Jesus and the women from Samaria. I was reading this story through one of my mom's Study Bibles. Jesus was talking to the Samaritan women about new covenant worship, and about the coming of the Holy Spirit, whom He spoke of often as streams of water.

That is an amazing story. Jesus said, "Please give me something to drink." Paraphrasing, she said, "You are a man. I am a woman, you are a Jew. I am a Samaritan, and you are going to ask me for something to drink?" And Jesus responded, "If you knew who it was that was talking to you right now, you would have asked Me for a drink and I would have given you living water."

At that point in the story, my mom's Study Bible has a lovely little note that says, "have you asked?" Have you asked? It kind of stings in how neglectful we can be in praying just for the everyday realities of life. Going into each day, we need to pray, "Spirit, You are the Lord. You are the One who transforms. If Adam has his way in me, I'm going to be resentful and all burned up inside, and I need for You to change my heart. I need for You to transform the way that I do my work. I want to do it to glorify Jesus Christ, who has shed His blood for me."



So why don't we make this commitment? Let's go into each day of work, saying, "Lord, transform my heart toward the work that I am doing, and help me to do it unto Christ, the King." This has been helping me. I have been triggering away this week by studying this passage. I have a lot to get done, but I have found new energy as it is a matter of just going back to repentance and renewal, daily. This is what we are called to as Christians.

We continue and we see more of this work ethic that is laid before us here in this text. We have seen what it has to say about comprehensive obedience and inward energy and desire. Now we see how it is carried along also by the knowledge of:

### **3. Impartial Recompence (3:24-25)**

There will be a payday someday. That is what these next verses are getting to. Verses 23 through 25:

**<sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup>For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.**

This passage speaks to us of recompence. Payback in both a positive and negative way. On the one hand, there is the promise of reward. On the other hand, there is the warning of retribution.

Dealing first with the promise of reward that this text deals with it by saying to work heartily,

**<sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.**

The Lord will give this reward. That is what the text says.

Understand that reward from the Lord is different than salvation from the Lord. Salvation is not a reward. Salvation is a gift. It is not about earning your way into Heaven. That comes by confessing your sin before the holiness of God and looking to Jesus in faith, the One is your righteousness in the presence of the Father, and trusting in what Jesus has done for you in His perfect life and in His sacrificial death. Salvation is a gift, not a reward.

But now let's understand that the New Testament speaks of reward and it does so often. As one born again by grace, saved by Christ, you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a new life. It is as you are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit in obedience to Him that reward accrues for you in Heaven.

There is the teaching called the Bema Seat Judgment. You can read about it in I Corinthians Chapter 3, where it says that we are going to stand before the judgment of Christ. Works are going to be there, that which is laid on the foundation who is Christ. Some works are just going to be burnt up—wood, hay, and stone. Others are going to be revealed to be gold, silver, and precious stone. So this verse is speaking of this recompence and this is given to us as a form of motivation from the heart of our God.

Then there is the other side of this that we see. Not only does this passage speak about reward, but it also speaks about payback. Do you see it emphasized there? On the one hand it is speaking about the inheritance as your reward, then we continue and see what it says in Verse 25:

**<sup>25</sup>For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.**

It is interesting when we speak about the partiality with which the Lord is going to be judging works. When you look at the companion epistle, Ephesians, you see that Paul also dealt with all these same issues. He spoke of this impartial rendering of the Lord as he was speaking to the masters in that context.

Here, this is the paragraph that is still speaking to the slaves; to the workers. Paul was saying here that if you become resentful and you assault somebody that you are working for, there is going to be payback for that. So if you become resentful and you steal, (evidently our friend, Onesimus, had an issue there) there is going to be payback for that. That is what is laid out for us here.

Let's understand this too as we think about the Christian bondservant and/or employee: when we think of those words "paid back," we can also praise God for the words "paid in full." Do you remember Tetelestai? That in Christ at the cross, the wrath of God was satisfied. The debt was paid in full.

Hallelujah and glory to God for that, but our Father in Heaven remains a Father who will discipline His children. Children of the Kingdom are not to be entitled, spoiled brats. That is not what God wants for us. Instead, He is shaping us and forming us into the image of Christ and there will be discipline if we fall out of line. So, this teaching is coming to us from the heart of a good and loving Father, teaching us to fall into His grace instead.

Therefore, if we are cheating our employers, doing wrong, we confess it and we seek to make amends in the power of the Spirit as those forgiven, but also as those being empowered by the Spirit to be those representing the Kingdom that we are called into.

This is for the sake, brothers and sisters, of our sobriety. It says here to do your work well "fearing the Lord." So we must receive this teaching as such. I praise God for His grace, and I can fall into His grace and find forgiveness and power to do things in ways that are in keeping with who God is and what He is shaping me to be.

We have seen these truths thus far that are speaking to employees. Now we will see how Paul spoke to the masters. They too are to conduct themselves according to the character of God in the power that the Holy Spirit will bring to them.

What comes next would really have gotten the attention of the people in Colossae who were listening to this instruction that was given. Earlier Paul was dealing with wives and husband and that whole context of Patria Potesta. He then dealt with children and fathers. And it was no surprise that Paul would give instruction to the wives and to the children, but then he turned around and told the husbands to love their wives with agape, to serve them with sacrificial love. He told the fathers not to exasperate their children. “Whoa,” the Colossians might have said. Now this?! What comes next?

Paul actually addressed the masters in the Roman society, telling them how the Spirit of God was going to lead them to conduct themselves. When I think about the situation, after Paul read that, if there was any pause, you would have heard a pin drop, because the masters were accountable before the Lord in how they conducted themselves. They were to conduct themselves well in the power of God as citizens of the Kingdom.

So we see:

#### **A Word to the Masters/Employers (4:1)**

**<sup>1</sup>Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.**

Paul used two very important words. You treat them *justly* and you treat them *fairly*. I want to remind you that the Word of God is verbally inspired. God chose the words that were given and these words are very meaningful.

That language of *justly* is integral to the doctrine of justification by faith. It is the same word that is so often translated *righteous*. Paul was saying “treat them in a righteous way. Masters, conduct yourselves toward your households servants in a way that is consistent with the righteousness that Christ Jesus has credited to your account. You relate to them with the same righteousness by which you stand before God, which has been given to you a gift. Now you gift them by treating them in a righteous way. Do this in the power of the Holy Spirit who has come into your life with power to make all things new, knowing that with the authority you have, you are representing the righteous One, and you are to conduct yourself in a way that represents Him.” That’s powerful. That’s electric! And that is just one of the words.

Verse 24 says to treat your bondservants justly and fairly. That would have really gotten the attention of the Colossians. Not that I am a Greek expert, but I have learned how to read Greek lexicons and dictionaries and see how these words are used.

This word *fairly*, it literally means “reaching forth.” The literal meaning of this very picturesque word is as though you are reaching forth with an offering in your hand. It is to afford. To supply. It is to render from one zone resource to another. Paul was essentially calling the Colossians to be generous. God has reached out His hand to provide for you, so now treat your bondservants justly. Be generous. Be providing for these human beings created in God’s image. Treat them well.

That is what Paul was telling those slave owners in the First Century world. “They need satisfying nourishment just like you do. You provide it for them. They want to enjoy the beauties of the world that God created just like you do. That is inherent to our being created in God, just soaking in the glories of all that He has made. Allow them to do so. Don’t think of yourself as perched above them. They need rest and significant conversation and love, and you provide for them.” This is what Paul was talking about here.

So if you want to talk about the termites being released in the wood of this giant tree of slavery in the First Century world, Paul was releasing truths to the Colossians that would cause slavery to collapse. Termites were released.

It is a pretty awesome reality that we are seeing here and if you are an employer, if you have people working under you, you are not to take advantage of them. You are to treat them righteously and fairly. They are to be loved in the workplace, because this is what is representative of the true Master who is in Heaven.

Once again, I think there might have been some men in the Roman world who needed to be taken to the foot of the cross, where they could have their sins forgiven, and to the empty grave where they could be equipped with new power to represent Jesus.

Likewise, even as these lofty standards are set before us, we find our forgiveness in Jesus Christ and not just that, we find power to live in newness of life. We have been raised up in Him and we get grace from Him to have sin washed away. Then as those forgiven, to walk in the ways of Jesus. So we praise God for the cross and the empty grave of Jesus Christ.

Bringing it all together, Verse 24 is the canopy.

**<sup>24</sup>...You are serving the Lord Christ.**

Where is this going to be all week long? Where is this going to be all month long? Burned on the frontal lobes of your brain. You are serving Christ. You are serving Christ who is the Lord.

We know that we love God because He first loved us. Amen to that, but when you look at what the New Testament says, you serve Christ because He first served you. You love God because He first loved you and you serve Christ, you serve the God-man, because He first served you. He served you by taking on flesh and coming into this world of darkness, bringing grace and truth as the Light of the world.

He served you by dying on the cross for your sin, taking the wrath of God, averting it from you as it was released upon Himself. Christ has served you by being Savior. Christ serves still by interceding for you. You are on His heart and He know you by name.

You serve Christ because He first served you, and He continues to serve you. Christ serves you with the ordinance of Communion, bringing you back to the cross and the empty grave again, and again, and again, nourishing you with the knowledge of the grave that saves, redeems, and transforms sinners like us.

So, it is in the knowledge of this grace that I will pray, then we will sing, and then we will go the Lord's Supper together.