



**Worship Service Theme:
Work (Sunday closest to Labor Day)**

Helpful elements:
Green table covering (Ordinary Time)
Small U.S. flags

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. This week in the U.S. we're celebrating Labor Day, so today we're looking at the theme of **work**.

According to the U.S. Dept. of Labor, "Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a creation of the labor movement and is a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the *strength, prosperity, and well-being* of our country."

Oregon was the first state to make Labor Day a holiday in 1887, and Colorado was among the first five to pass the law that year. In 1894, Congress made Labor Day a national holiday.

Today, we'll consider work – and rest – as they relate to our lives of faith. Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Amazing Grace

First reading: Deuteronomy 5:12-15. This is one of the Ten Commandments:

¹² Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Matthew 12:1-14

¹At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. Jesus' disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Jesus, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." ³[But Jesus] said to them,... "the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." ⁹Jesus went on from there and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰And a man was there with a withered hand. And the Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. ¹¹Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." ¹³Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Jesus, to find a way to destroy him.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let's talk more about work and labor.

- What kinds of work have you done in your life, either inside or outside the home? [*generate lots of examples: farming, housekeeping, teaching, caring for children, office work, nursing...*]
- When you think about the work you've done, what do you think made that work good? What was good about your work?
 - Provided for family
 - Gave meaning to the day; dignity
 - Accomplished things, felt productive, good quality
 - Helped others; working with a team
- What was hard about your work?
 - Sacrifice of time
 - Sometimes safety: certain jobs are dangerous
 - Exhaustion, boredom, stress; every day
- What makes work a gift from God?
 - We are fortunate to have work! (Not everyone does...)

- With God’s help, we can do good for others and provide for ourselves, our families, and even others less fortunate.
- So we work ... but according to the scriptures, we’re also commanded to rest. Let’s look back at the section we read earlier; this is the fourth of the Ten Commandments, when God says to the people, “Take a Sabbath day – take a day off.”
 - Who is supposed to rest?
 - You and everyone around you, including those who work for you: “that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.”
 - What are we supposed to do while we rest?
 - Remember God’s provision for us! “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.”
 - We don’t have to work 24/7 to survive. Who takes care of us and provides all that we need?
 - God takes care of us. Resting reminds us of this.
- The spirit of the law is to *do good*. When Jesus heals the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, why do you think the Pharisees are upset?
 - They care more about the letter of the law (“don’t work on the Sabbath!”) than the spirit of the law (love people).
 - Jesus values people more than what people can do. Work matters, but people matter more. Labor Day celebrates both.
 - What sorts of good work can we do today? Your contribution matters!

... Let’s take a moment to silently pray and reflect on blessing of work and rest.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

Lord’s Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

This is My Father's World

It is Well with My Soul

Standing on the Promises

Third Reading: Quotes on Work

Do not worry about who gets the credit or praise of the work done. Continue work to give your best. Your reward may come unexpectedly. –Lailah Gifty Akita, Ghanaian writer and founder of Smart Youth Volunteers Foundation

Every job from the heart is, ultimately, of equal value. The nurse injects the syringe; the writer slides the pen; the farmer plows the dirt; the comedian draws the laughter. [Money and income are] the perfect deceiver of a [person's] true worth. –Criss Jami, American poet

All life demands struggle. Those who have everything given to them become lazy, selfish, and insensitive to the real values of life. The very striving and hard work that we so constantly try to avoid is the major building block in the person we are today. –Pope Paul VI

Nothing ever comes to one, that is worth having, except as a result of hard work. –educator, author, and speaker Booker T. Washington

The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary. –football coach Vince Lombardi

Suggested Hymns:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Shall We Gather at the River

Fourth Reading: A lighthearted story about work called “Who’s the Boss?”¹ 😊

A man went into a pet shop to buy a parrot.

The shop owner pointed to three parrots on a perch that looked exactly alike – in fact they were nearly identical. The shop owner said to the man, “The parrot on the left costs \$500.”

¹ adapted from <http://jokes.cc.com/funny-work/hkl948/the-boss>

"Wow! Why does this parrot cost so much?" the man asked.

The shop owner said, "Well, it's because that parrot knows how to use a computer."

The man then asked about the parrot on the right, and the shop owner told the man that that parrot cost \$1,000.

"What?" said the man. "Why so much?"

The shop owner answered, "That's because it can do everything the parrot on the left can do, plus it knows how to create documents, spreadsheets, and can process database management."

Naturally, the increasingly startled man asked about the parrot in the middle. The shop owner said, "Well, that parrot costs \$5,000."

"You've got to be kidding!" the man exclaimed. "What can *that* parrot do?"

The shop owner replied, "To be honest, I've never seen him do anything, but the other two call him the Boss!"

Suggested Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

I Need Thee Every Hour

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word "Lord")

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)