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# Some Words from Martin Luther Regarding Labor

## God Provides — Through Man's Work

To put it briefly, God wants people to work. If you did not farm or work, you would have to lie behind the stove a long time in order to have anything given to you. It is true, of course, that God could support you without work, could let fried and boiled foods, corn, and wine grow on the table for you. But He will not do this. He wants you to work and to use your reason in this matter. ... He gives us wool, letting it grow for us on the sheep. But the wool is not immediately converted into cloth. We must work it up to make cloth of it. When the cloth is there, it does not promptly become a coat. First the tailor must make it. And so on; in everything God acts in such a way that He will provide, but we should work.

## All Want Possessions, Power, Pleasure — but Not Work

All the world is so constituted that if a man can avoid work, he does so; and yet he wants his share of enjoyment. As the heathen poet says: *Ingenium est hominum a labore proclive ad libidinem* (it is characteristic of all human beings to incline from work to pleasure). All people like glory and possessions; everybody wants to rise in the world and aims at a prominent position. But when they are there and feel the work and worry it entails, they soon become disgusted and do not continue; for they sought nothing but their pleasure and ease. In like manner everybody wants to find pleasure and delight in marriage, and then, when they enter it and do not find pleasure and delight in marriage, they become the enemies of marriage. The same thing is going on in all the other estates. As a result, those who are faithful in their positions are very rare birds indeed in this world. For faithfulness entails labor and disgust. He who wants to discharge his duties in a right, God-pleasing manner will soon see what the trouble he has to expect and how heavy the burden is. Consequently, he will often complain, as the world cries, that it is a hard, miserable life. He will soon say: Who would have believed that this position entailed so much trouble? Ah, if only I were rid of it! Indeed, my friend, if this is not what you wanted, you should not have gone into it in the first place. If a person wants nothing but pleasure and delight or glory and wants to be at the head of things — who would not like that? But this is the way the world is. It likes nothing but the lust of the flesh.



## God's Method of Supporting Us

God bestows every good thing; but you must "pitch in" and "take the bull by the horns," that is, you must work and supply God with a reason and a covering ... All this is said against those who tempt God, who want to do nothing, and who imagine that God should give and do whatever they desire, without their labor and industry. To them this proverb is proper advice: *Verlasse dich drauf and backe nicht* (Rely on it — God's help — and do not bake); again: *Harre, bis dir ein gebraten Huhn ins Maul liege* (Wait until a fried chicken flies into your mouth). You see, Gods wants no lazy idlers; but we should work faithfully and diligently, every one of us, according to his calling and office; then He will bless and prosper our efforts. On the other hand, I also say this to the presumptuous, who imagine that their success comes or must come and be acquired through their industry and labor, through their ability and wisdom, and pay no attention to God. The right middle way is not to be lazy and indolent or to rely on one's own work and doing but to work and act and yet expect all success from God alone.

## Idleness Wears You Down

Albert, Archbishop of Mayence, used to say that the human heart is like a millstone. If you pour grain on the stone, it revolves, crushes and powders it, and turns it into flour. But if no grain is there, the stone revolves anyway; but now it crushes itself and becomes thinner, smaller, and narrower. In like manner, the human heart wants something to do. If it does not have the works of its calling to perform, the devil comes and shoots temptation, melancholy, and sadness into it. And then the heart consumes itself with sadness. It pines away, and many a man worries himself to death.



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**Date:** November 23, 2011

## ✠ *The ORDER of THANKSGIVING Worship* ✠

Worship Preparation:.....Psalm 100, TLH p. 144 f.

Entrance:

Opening Hymn:.....TLH 570: Praise, Oh, Praise, Our God and King

Responsive Readings:.....Passages About Labor, Tune of TLH 360

P: [Deuteronomy 8:18] *You shall remember the LORD your God,*

C: *for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant ...*

P: [Psalm 127:1] *Unless the LORD builds the house,*

C: *They labor in vain who build it; ...*

P: [Proverbs 10:3-5] *The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish, But He casts away the desire of the wicked.*

C: *He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.*

P: *He who gathers in summer is a wise son;*

C: *He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.*

C [♪]: All ye who on this earth do dwell,  
Give thanks and glorify  
The Lord whose praises ever swell  
In seraph songs on high. [TLH 581:1]

P: [Proverbs 6:6-8] *Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise,*

C: *Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest.*

P: [Proverbs 12:11] *He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread,*  
C: But he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding.  
P: [Proverbs 12:27] *The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting,*  
C: But diligence is man's precious possession.  
P: [Proverbs 13:4] *The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing;*  
C: But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.  
P: [Proverbs 13:11] *Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished,*  
C: But he who gathers by labor will increase.  
P: [Proverbs 20:13] *Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty;*  
C: Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.

C [♪]: May He adorn with precious peace  
Our own, our native, land  
And crown with joys that never cease  
The labors of our hand. [TLH 581:6]

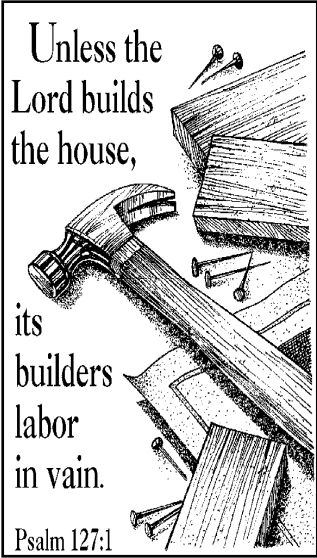
P: [Proverbs 21:5] *The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty,*  
C: But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.  
P: [Proverbs 28:19] *He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,*  
C: But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!

P: [Colossians 3:22-24] *Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh,*  
C: not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.  
P: *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,*  
C: knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

P: [Psalm 128:2] *When you eat the labor of your hands,*  
C: You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.


P: [Ecclesiastes 3:13] ... *every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—*  
C: it is the gift of God.

C [♪]: Long as we tarry here below  
Our saving Health is He;  
And when from earth to heaven we go,  
May He our portion be! [TLH 581:7]



Children:..... So Now We Lift Our Voices (SueAnne Kirkham)  
Scripture Reading:.....2 Thessalonians 3:7-12  
Choir:.....A Celebration of Thanks - Price/Besig

Confession of Faith:..... Luther's Explanation to the First Article

 I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. What does this mean? I believe that God has created me and all creatures. He has given me my body and life, eyes, ears, and all my bodily members, my mind and all my senses, and still keeps them for me. God also preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land, animals, and all my property and all I need to support this body and life. He protects me from all danger. He guards and defends me from every evil. God does all this because He is my good and gracious Father in heaven, not because of anything I have done to earn or deserve it. For all of this it is my duty to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

Hymn:..... TLH 540: With the Lord Begin Thy Task  
Sermon:..... Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

(18) Here is what I have seen: *It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage.* (19) As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor -- *this is the gift of God.* (20) For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps *him* busy with the joy of his heart.

Enjoy the Good of Your Labor Which God Gives!

Response:..... Tune of TLH 644: Praise God

C [♪]: Thy gentle blessings, Lord, outpour  
On all our labor evermore;  
Our hearts with Thy good Spirit fill  
That we may gladly do Thy will. [TLH 7:2]  
Crown all our labors with success,  
Each one in his own calling bless.  
May all we do or think or say  
Exalt and praise Thee, Lord, this day! [TLH 547:4]



Hymn:..... TLH 566: Christ, by heavenly hosts Adored  
Offering, Prayer, Lord's Prayer:  
Benediction:  
C: [sing] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Closing Hymn:..... TLH 792: Let All Things Now Living

