

## More About Jesus, Week 17: Jesus worked hard (Mark 3:20-21) by Paul Hammons

The book of Mark includes some of the most vivid descriptions of the gospel account, and as a result, it gives us a wealth of insight into who Jesus was as a person. And one of the things that shows up most clearly is Jesus' relentless work ethic.

While he took time to rest, his adult life was characterized by a constant cycle of traveling, healing, and teaching. Mark twice refers to he and his disciples not having time to eat because of their schedule. It was so frenetic at times that we read in Mark 3:20, *"when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"*

Today, we would call that obsessive behavior, and we would label it unhealthy. But Jesus didn't have the same perspective as we have in our own lives, because he understood that he had a short window of time to accomplish the greatest work mankind has ever seen.

In John 9, as he and the disciples were leaving the temple, they saw a blind man, and when asked why the man had been born blind, Jesus made the point that he was there in that condition at that time so that Jesus could do a great work through him. He saw the man - as he saw everything in life - as an opportunity to perform God's work.

*We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." - Jn 9:4-5*

Jesus redeemed the time, constantly at work in preparing the disciples and the people around him for the advent of his heavenly kingdom. That mindset didn't start with his baptism and the beginning of his ministry. The first words of Jesus that we read were spoken when he was 12 years old, when his parents found him in the temple engaged in God's word with the Jewish leaders.

*And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" - Lk 2:49-50*

Jesus most likely learned a lot about hard work from his surrogate father, Joseph, who was a "tekton," the word for carpenter or builder (Mark 6:3). As first-born, he would have spent most of the time between those early years and the beginning of his ministry (Luke 3:23) at work, either building houses or house components, or as some have speculated, wooden farm implements like plows and yokes - objects Jesus used often in his illustrations.

But the greater model of work ethic for Jesus was his Heavenly Father. When asked why he healed people on the Sabbath - a day of rest - Jesus replied, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." Jn 5:17.

If we want to be like Jesus, one of the first things we have to cultivate is a willingness to work hard at whatever we do (Col. 3:23), but specifically in the context of our spiritual work and service to God. Jesus constantly referred to the idea of God's people as servants, each assigned a task (Mark 13:34) and laboring in the vineyard of God's kingdom with the expectation that they produce fruit for the owner of the vineyard (Matt. 20-21) who is God.

And Jesus called his disciples to work with the same sense of urgency that he had. Jesus knew when his time would come and how long he had to work - but his disciples don't have that insight. We are laborers in the vineyard, and we don't know when the harvest will come. That can lead to urgency, or it can lead to procrastination.

When Jesus talks to his disciples at the well in Samaria, waiting for the Samaritan woman to return with the people of her village, he tells the apostles why he isn't thinking about eating in that moment:

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. - Jn 4:34-35.

Are we focused on the work of the Father as Jesus was? Not everyone was called to "leave everything" and follow in the ministry of the word, but all of us are called to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23) in service to God, whatever that may be.

Jesus calls each of us to "take my yoke upon you" (Mat. 11:29-30) and do the work God has called us to do in service of our Lord. Will we perform that work as Jesus did, redeeming the time wisely and urgently? Or will we say "My master is delayed in coming" (Luke 12:45) and focus more on the things we want to do?