

Sermon Script: Godspace 9-5

1. The Components

Here we are in this series called Godspace 9-5

... and today's part one is called, 'The Components'

... which means we're going to look across the board at all the different components of this topic

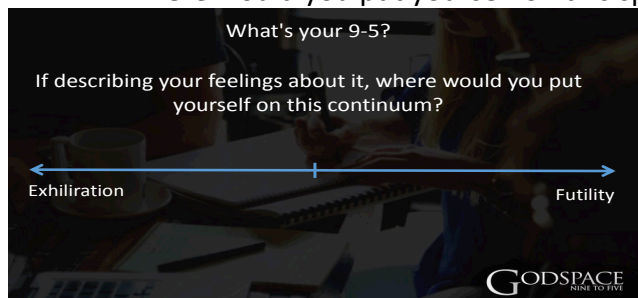
- That will include a biblical framework, which is what you need in any topical sermon
 - [Four Aspects: Creation - Fall - Redemption - End]

But let's start with a definition...

- This three week series will explore the link between faith and what you do during the working week
- Most of the adults here - according to our survey - are in paid employment during the week
 - But some of you are also students at high school or tertiary level, some are homemakers and some are retired
- So in this series, I'll often talk about 'your 9-5', which means whatever it is you do during the week
 - This high school themed stage set, gives one example of a place many of us are in our 9-5

So what is your 9-5?

- And how do you currently feel about it?
 - Where would you put yourself on this spectrum?



You can see already how important this topic is...

... because your 9-5

... which takes up so much of your life (35%)

... can bring about in you feelings all the way from exhilaration to futility

It's the best thing in the world...

... when it's going well

◆ And it feels a privilege to be able to do it all week

- But when it goes badly it can sour our whole experience of life

It strikes me, that as a pastor...

... I've heard many times from people down when their job or home situation is getting them down

- at the futile end of the spectrum

... but I seldom hear from people at the exhilarated end

A graphic example of exhilaration versus futility...

... is seen in the last month

- How must it feel to be Jacinda Ardern?
 - Even with her positivity I'll bet she never imagined Labour would jump ahead by 18% in just three weeks!

But how futile must it all seem...

... now if you're Peter Dunne?

- He describes the current political scene as a circus
- After 33 years as an MP for Ohariu
 - Working hard, believing in what it's all about, giving everything
 - Then his party like many of the smaller parties takes a big hit because of the Jacinda effect
 - ◆ Maybe he looks back and says, *Why couldn't there have been a Peter Dunne effect?*

And I think of Gareth Morgan...

... who's started a political party from scratch

... and who's been sweating over highly detailed policies for months

... and promoting them constantly on Facebook

... to suddenly find in these last three weeks his support is cut in half and he really has no show of making 5%

- I wonder if all that hard work now seems futile?

And I wonder where Bill English would put himself

... watching his big lead as preferred Prime Minister get overturned in the latest poll?

- ◆ It must seem so unfair

Our work, our 9-5

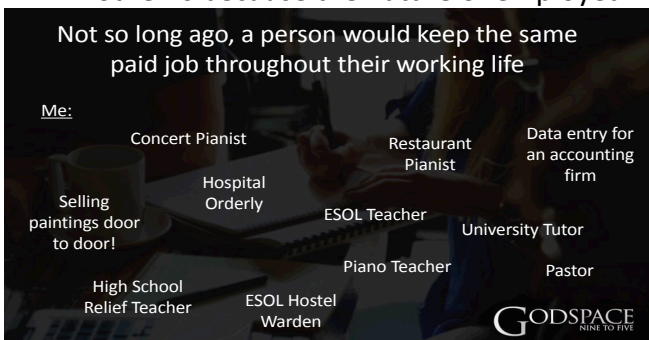
... can take us to the mountain tops

... or it can make us wonder if life has any point

- There's so much at stake!

So that's one reason it's important to do this series

- Another is because the nature of employed work has changed so radically in this generation



Not so long ago, a person would keep the same paid job throughout their working life

- I guess I'm typical of my generation
 - I've done 11 different paid jobs and I've got plenty of my working life left to go

My first paid job was...

... doing Data Entry for an accounting firm

- That was so boring!
- But nice to get money!
 - ◆ The workplace deal seemed to be that you get paid to get bored

Then I became a piano teacher

- I had to learn how to make statements & invoices & deal with snotty kids who didn't want to be learn
- I had more fun being a university tutor, marking assignments and running tutorials

All that time I was pursuing my dream of being a Concert Pianist

... which I did after university

- But had to support myself doing way less glamorous jobs like:
 - Being a Restaurant Pianist - which sounds but you get really tired of playing Elton John
 - Being a hospital orderly was actually fascinating
 - Then things hit an all time low when I had a crack at selling paintings door to door
 - ◆ Don't even think about doing it!

Then I got a job as a Warden in an ESOL hostel

... which I liked so much that I trained as an ESOL teacher

- I also had a go at being a High School Relief Teacher
 - ... before finally landing the job that I've kept for 19 years - Pastor

That would have been unthinkable for my grandparents

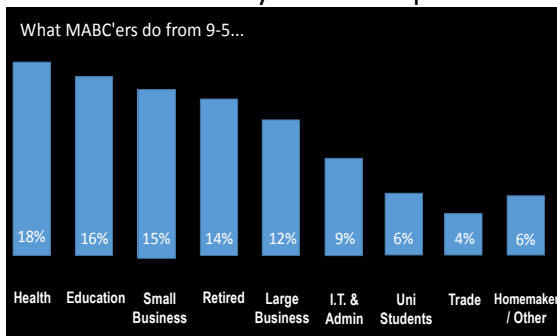
- I wonder if we realise how lucky we are to have so many opportunities today?

If that is me, then what about you?

- What do you all do in your 9-5?
 - The reason this question is interesting is that it varies massively from one church to the next

What do you think we have most of here at MABC?

- We did a survey over a couple of Sundays and here's what we found out:



Our church has a lot of health workers!

- 18% of us
- We also have quite a few in Education - 16%
- And loads of Small Business people - 15%
- A fair few are retired
- 12% in Large Businesses
- 9% in I.T. or Admin
- 6% Uni Students
- Then Trades, Homemakers & Other make up the final categories

So understanding our church community better is yet another goal of this series

... and the groups that meet are a great chance for that

But probably the biggest reason of all for this series

... is that NZ Christians - to quite a degree - have made faith and work two separate things

I was absolutely amazed...

... when a Christian woman who I really respect

... told me she'd never really thought about how her faith might come into her work

- She also said: 'When I get stressed at work, I'm probably worse in my behaviour than any of the non christians around me'
 - She's a healthcare worker, and in her 50's

- ◆ She's been a Christian a long time

How can we do that, as Christians?

- More than a third of our lives spent at work, on average
 - That's a third of her life that she hasn't let God into!
- But maybe it's the church's fault
 - Maybe churches have given the impression that God's only interested in specifically Christian work

So what we really need to do as we start out...

... is take a look at how God sees our work as revealed in Scripture

PRAYER

When you open the very first pages of the Bible...

... it's like a journal of work

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Gen 1:1)

- He makes light; He makes land and water
 - And he looks at what he makes each day and says it's good
- God intended work to be fulfilling - that's how it was at the start

And if we thought God only did 6 days of work then called it quits...

... we'd be wrong

- Scripture describes God's work as being like that of a shepherd, a potter, a craftworker, a builder, an architect, a gardener, a farmer, a musician and an artist
- So it's kind of crazy if we imagine that God is only interested in saving souls
 - ... or things we today class as 'spiritual activities'
 - ... or to imagine that God has no interest in what you do 9-5
- He created it!
 - n - He put giftedness and passion in you
 - u - And he himself is an artist, a gardener, a builder - all of these things

And one really interesting thing to notice...

... is that God doesn't differentiate between proper work and any other work

- So this crazy distinction we have today is a product of our western culture:
 - 'Honey, can you finish these dishes? I've got to go to work'
 - ◆ Why is paid work, 'work' but doing dishes isn't work?

Am I working if I:

- *Read to my kids at bedtime?*
- *Go to a school board meeting?*
- *Help the elderly neighbour with her groceries?*
- *Sit with my friend who just lost his brother in a car accident?*

All of this is work from God's perspective

- **1. But our culture - unlike the culture of biblical times - is very compartmentalised**

So I'd say that's the first thing Scripture teaches us

- A second thing is that: **We were born to work in partnership with God**
 - Genesis 1:26 'Let us make human beings in our image'
 - ◆ If God is a worker and we're created in His image, then we are created for work also

So it is that Adam is given the job...

... in Gen 2:15 of tending the garden of Eden

- ◆ Humanity is also tasked with filling the earth and subduing it

And a wonderful picture of God and man working together

... is Gen 2:19-20 where God brings the birds and animals to Adam for him to name

- Names were incredibly important in Hebrew culture so this would've been viewed as a really important role

But here's the biggest implication of number two:

- As a kid in school, the greatest joy imaginable was to have no work to do
 - No assignments, or tests, or classes to go to
- I would look at adults and think, 'Once you're out of school you can choose to relax and not work. So why are all you adults working?'
 - And even more than that, How is it, that adults get **depressed** when they are unemployed?
 - ◆ *They should be going 'Wahoo! Let's hit the beach!'*
 - It just seemed so ridiculous!

The reason it's so upsetting when we get made redundant or can't find work...

... is because we're made in God's image.

- He's a worker, so automatically we are too
 - We need purpose, we need to expend energy on something worthwhile
 - ... and to be able to look back on it at the end of the day
 - ... and say: ***That is good!***

Unfortunately, we don't all feel like that...

... at the end of a day's work

- But why not?
 - If that's how work was in the beginning, why isn't it always fulfilling for us like it was for God?

2. Everything about work changes in Genesis three

We call it the Fall of Humanity

- It's the moment where Adam disobeys God and sin enters the equation
 - Listen closely to see how work is affected:

Genesis 3:17-19 (NLT)

17 And to the man he said,

"Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,

the ground is cursed because of you.

All your life you will **struggle** to scratch a living from it.

18 It will grow **thorns and thistles** for you,
though you will eat of its grains.

19 By the **sweat of your brow**

will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.

For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return."

3. The Fall means four things about work changed:

1. Work no longer seems like a partnership between God and humanity

- Quite the opposite
 - Most people today would say God has nothing to do with their work
- In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were intimate with God; they worked with him

- But after the Fall they were thrown out of Eden, no longer close with God
- So even for Christians today, there's often a big divide between Sunday and Monday
 - We don't have the automatic feeling of intimacy with God that there was back in Eden

2. Our environment is broken - we have to work harder

- The ground is cursed because of you
- It will bear thorns and thistles
- You will struggle
- By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food
 - u - So feelings of frustration are part of our experience
- We see the effects of our broken environment today
 - n - And we see greed and exploitation of the environment
 - rather than the conserving and cultivating that Adam did in Eden before The Fall
- This isn't how it was in the beginning
 - But it is reality after the Fall

3. While work was pleasurable, creative and fulfilling in Eden, work can now feel pointless at one extreme, or compulsive at the other

- Rather than getting our identity from God, our identity can get all tied up with our work
 - n - So we work harder and harder to gain respect from others
 - u - We become working machines;
 - u
 - l - Driving ourselves into the ground, because we desperately want acceptance
- God never intended that
 - n - That's a result of the Fall

4. And fourthly, Eden's peacefulness, is replaced by deceit, selfishness, blame, power struggles & stress

- Constantly in our workplaces we have to work at establishing trust

So notice how much changes because of sin's role in the world:

- It affects our relationship with **God**, our relationship with **Creation**, our relationship with **Ourselves** and our relationship with **Each other**

How depressing, how frustrating, how hopeless!

But then the biblical story changes

- Jesus comes

Some Christians think...

... that Jesus came just so they could get a ticket to heaven

- Jesus achieved far more than that
 - In fact, you could sum up all the work Jesus ever did, as 'Undoing the effects of the Fall'
 - n - Col 1:20a: Through Christ, God reconciled everything to himself.-

4. Jesus came so that we can restore those four things (Col 1:6,11-14, 20-23)

- Because of Jesus, we can start to recreate the way things were in Eden
- Instead of ignoring God all week until Sunday, we can take Him into our workplace
 - ... and rediscover what it was in the beginning to work in partnership with God
- Instead of abusing and exploiting our environment, we can care about just as Adam did in Eden
 - ... and the better we treat the environment the better it treats us
- With God's help we can avoid being compulsive about work;
 - ... and in discovering our giftedness and calling we can find purpose in our work
- And we can be peacemakers in our workplace in light of the peacefulness of Eden

Jesus wants to transform your 9-5!

And while this is the era we live in...

... where things are still imperfect but we work with Jesus to change them
... this isn't the end of the biblical story

Just for fun, I posted on FB last week:

- 'Who will do the dishes in heaven?'
- n - What's the answer?
- Nobody had thought about it
- n - *Some said Jesus would do them because he likes to serve rather than be served*
- n - *Someone said, 'There won't be dishes in heaven; dishes are a result of the Fall;*
- n - *Some said, 'Pastors should do them*
- n - *And lots of people just put: 'Not me'*

Basically, heaven sounded like a place where no one washes up

- It sounded like a teenage camp with no one in charge

We've been talking about work today

- Will we do any work in heaven?

Can you imagine being inactive for the whole of eternity?

- If you were created for work;
 - in the image of God who himself is a worker
 - ... does it make any sense that we would sit on our hands for eternity?

It's true that Scripture talks about 'entering your rest'

- But it's most likely that means rest of the struggle and toil that results from the Fall
 - n - Because Scripture also says:
Revelation 22:3
3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

Isaiah 65:21,25

They will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

My chosen ones will long enjoy
the work of their hands.

They will not toil in vain,

... which makes it pretty clear that work will once again become like it was at the start:

5. In eternity we will work again, as partners with God

What's the challenge from all of this then?

- It's to bring God into your week
- It's to get rid of the Sunday-Monday divide, which only exists because of our fallenness
- It's to reverse the effects of the Fall in those 4 ways
 - *If you really want to take this seriously, go along to one of those Groups on the flier*

Your work, your 9-5, really matters to God

- He wants you to be fulfilled in it
 - n - to arrive at the end of the day and be able say: 'That was good'
 - ... because that's the way things were at the beginning
 - ... and it's the way they will be in eternity