

This Labor Day weekend celebrates a federal holiday established in 1894 to recognize the contributions of workers in the development and achievements of the United States.

A resolution of the American Federation of Labor in 1909 adopted the Sunday before Labor Day as Labor Sunday, dedicated to the spiritual and educational aspects of the labor movement. The motive for Labor Sunday was political, not theological.

The bible speaks about workers and work in relationship to God. Genesis 2.7 reads: *Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.* And, Genesis 2.15 reads: *The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to **dress** it and to **keep** it.*

God carefully crafted Adam, placed him in God's garden to **dress it and keep** it.

The Hebrew words for **dress** and **keep** in Genesis 2 are used elsewhere in the Old Testament to convey God's expectation for God's people to **worship and serve** God. Placing this thought in Genesis 2 suggests that the work Adam did in God's Garden was done as God. Work as **worship and serve** courses its way throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament.

Romans 12 is but one New Testament example that expresses the Genesis 2 teaching of God's call for God's people to **worship and serve** Him. Consider these three points.

1. God's call to **worship and serve** Him is an act of mercy – showing the deep compassion God has for all people
 - *¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the **mercies of God**, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual worship**.*
 - **mercies of God** points us to the perfect life, innocent death and resurrection of Christ that forgives all sin, rescues from death and Satan, and gives eternal life to all who believe.
 - **spiritual worship** is our call to **worship and serve** God.
2. God's grace gifts God's people to **worship and serve** God. Grace – God reaching (*inclining*) to people because He is *disposed* to bless (be near) them.
 - *⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*
3. God's love motivates God's people to **worship and serve** Him...for the work of serving Him by serving others
 - *⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Never be lacking in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

Adam was created to ‘*worship God through a life of service.*’ And, we also, are blessed, in whatever is our vocation, to be extensions of His mercy and grace in this fallen world through our work and labor.

So, today - We want to be thankful...

1. For all who labor. All essential workers.
2. Thankful for Luther’s teaching on vocation, reminding us that our vocations are God’s Masks, behind which He remains hidden, although He does all things...“God gives every good thing, but not by just waving a hand. God gives all good gifts; but you must lend a hand and take the bull by the horns, which means you must work to give God an occasion and a mask.”
3. Thankful for God’s mercy that calls us, His grace the gifts us, and His love that motivates our life-long assigned work, our vocation, to worship God through a life of service.
4. Thankful for fellow believers, workers who “*spur one another toward love and good works.*” [Hebrews 10.24]...The Apostle Paul uses athletic metaphor to describe intensity of our daily vocational walk. [Philippians 2:16, Galatians 2:2, and Galatians 5:7. In 2 Timothy 4:7]
 - Sydney McLaughlin won gold in the women’s 400-meter hurdles in the recent Tokyo Olympics. Her teammate and training partner Dalilah Muhammad won silver.
 - Sydney described the relationship between her and Muhammad as not a rivalry of the truest sense. “Iron sharpens iron. People can call it whatever they want to call it; it’s two great athletes pushing each other to be better. There’s no animosity or hard feelings. It’s just two people trying to be their best. We wouldn’t be able to have these world records go back and forth without one another.”
 - Sydney on preparing for her historic race: “I kept hearing God say, ‘Just focus on me’. It was the best race plan I could have ever assembled. I no longer run for self-recognition, but to reflect His perfect will that is already set in stone. I don’t deserve anything. But by grace, through faith, Jesus has given me everything. Records come and go. The glory of God is eternal. Thank you Father.”
5. Thankful for God’s encouragement and promise: “*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*” [1 Corinthians 15.58]

The Peace of the Lord be with you. Amen