Sermon Series: "*Front Page Faith*"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—1/13/2002
Title: "Work Ethics or Ethical Work"
Text: 1 Thessalonians 4: 9-12 & 2 Thessalonians 3: 7-13
Introduction: *Ills.: Welfare Rolls Diminish & Unethical Work Behavior*
Theme: When we view our life as redeemed in Christ Jesus for a purposeful living, whether employed or unemployed, whether self-sufficient or dependent on others' assistance, we strive to glorify God by our conduct and attitude

Work and welfare — God's perspective

- Biblical principles on welfare
  1. Care for my "*brother*" in his or her need is divinely mandated (1 Thess. 4: 9-10)
     a. *"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" 1 John 3:17*
     b. **Ills.: Assuring your welfare**
  2. If I have the ability and the opportunity to work, I should (even if it is not to my current expectation)
     a. **Read 2 Thess. 3: 7-12**
     b. The dangers of not doing that (*idle = devil's workshop; busybody; "you will not eat"*)
     c. Look for the new opportunities God has for you in a dead end job or a time of unemployment = service opportun)
     d. **Ills.: Someone Must Labor**
- Biblical principles on work
  1. ***Disciplined work habit that are driven by divine love*** (**1 Thes 4: 9**)
     a. *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us." 1 John 4: 18, 19*
  2. ***Work that has propriety in mind and godliness in action*** (**1 Thes. 4: 12**)
     a. *"Everything is permissible"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. 1 Cor 10: 23,24*

A work ethic which is ethically Christian

- In Christ we give up our right to claim our "***rights***" (**Print and read 2 Thess. 3: 8-9**)
  1. Much of today's entitlement mentality in the work place and our expectation of government is selfishly driven
  2. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20*
  3. Our attitude toward work and provision begins with an "other centered" attitude born in Christ (8)
- Seeing your work as a ministry (**Print and read 1 Thess 4: 12 and 2 Thess. 3: 12, 13**)
  1. The work of your hands redeemed in Christ from the curse of the fall
  2. **Ills: Our Dual Calling**
  3. Concerned as much about the witness you give as the result which you achieve
- Making it our goal to worship God through our work
  1. *"So we make it our goal to please him." 2 Cor 5: 9*
  2. Because your body is a house of worship
     a. *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.1 Cor. 6:19-20*
  3. Because your efforts are a "living offering"
     a. *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." Rom 12:1-2*
  4. Because audience/boss is an audience of One

a. *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" Col. 3:23-24.*

- Don't give up just because others do (2 Thes. 3: 13)
  1. *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Gal. 6:9*
  2. **Ills.: Encouraging the work of others**

Welfare Rolls Dwindle

The 5.8 million welfare recipients in the USA in 2000 was the lowest number since the 1960s. Recipients by year: 1965: 4.3 million 1971: approximately 10 million 1981: approximately 11.5 million 1989: approximately 11 million 1994: 14.2 million 2000: 5.8 million

Unethical Work Behavior

Forty-eight percent of American workers admit to taking unethical or illegal actions in the past year. *USA Today* (4/14/97) listed the five most common types of unethical/illegal behavior that workers say they have engaged in because of pressure: --Cut corners on quality control --Covered up incidents --Abused or lied about sick days --Lied to or deceived customers --Put inappropriate pressure on others.

Assuring Your Welfare

The board reports to the pastor: "The bad news is that we turned down your cost-of-living raise. The good news is that you're now eligible for assistance from our Food Pantry."

Someone Must Labor

During a stay with grandparents, my 5-year-old niece Michaela pulled corn on a neighbor's farm for the first time. Her grandparents used the experience as a teaching tool, explaining to Michaela that the corn was God's blessing to them. At first, the work was great fun, but after only a few minutes Michaela looked at her grandmother and commented, "You know you can buy this in the grocery store, don't you?"

Our Dual Calling

Max DePree, CEO of Herman Miller, Inc., describes a simple, but profound, incident that altered the culture of his organization: In the furniture industry of the 1920's, the machines of most factories were not run by electric motors but by pulleys from a central drive shaft. The millwright was the person on whom the entire activity of the operation depended. He was the key person. One day, the millwright died. My father, being a young manager at the time, did not know what to do when a key person died, but thought he ought to go visit the family. He went to the house and was invited to join the family in the living room. The widow asked my father if it would be all right if she read aloud some poetry. Naturally, he agreed. She went into another room, came back with a bound book, and for many minutes read selected pieces of beautiful poetry. When she finished, my father commented on how beautiful the poetry was and asked who wrote it. She replied that her husband, the millwright, was the poet. It is now nearly 60 years since the millwright died, and my father and many of us at Herman Miller continue to wonder: Was he a poet who did millwright's work, or was he a millwright who wrote poetry?

Encourage the Work of Others

Many years ago, a ten-year-old boy walked up to the counter of a soda shop and climbed onto a stool. He caught the eye of the waitress and asked, "How much is an ice cream sundae?" "Fifty cents," the waitress replied. The boy reached into his pockets, pulled out a handful of change, and began counting. The waitress frowned impatiently. After all, she had other customers to wait on. The boy squinted up at the waitress. "How much is a dish of *plain* ice cream?" he asked. The waitress sighed and rolled her eyes. "Thirty-five cents," she said with a note of irritation. Again, the boy counted his coins. At last, he said, "I'll have the plain ice cream, please." He put a quarter and two nickels on the counter. The waitress took the coins, brought the ice cream, and walked away. About ten minutes later, she returned and found the ice cream dish empty. The boy was gone. She picked up the empty dish—then swallowed hard. There on the counter, next to the wet spot where the dish had been, were two nickels and five pennies. The boy had had enough for a sundae, but he had ordered plain ice cream so he could leave a tip.

1 Thes. 4:9-12

You don't need anyone to write to you about the way Christians should love each other. God has taught you to love each other. [10]In fact, you are showing love to all the Christians throughout the province of Macedonia. We encourage you as believers to excel in love even more. [11]Also, make it your goal to live quietly, do your work, and earn your own living, as we ordered you. [12]Then your way of life will win respect from those outside the church, and you won't have to depend on anyone else for what you need. [GW]

2 Thes. 3:7-13

You know what you must do to imitate us. We lived a disciplined life among you. [8]We didn't eat anyone's food without paying for it. Instead, we worked hard and struggled night and day in order not to be a burden to any of you. [9]It's not as though we didn't have a right to receive support. Rather, we wanted to set an example for you to follow. [10]While we were with you, we gave you the order: "Whoever doesn't want to work shouldn't be allowed to eat."

[11]We hear that some of you are not living disciplined lives. You're not working, so you go around interfering in other people's lives. [12]We order and encourage such people by the Lord Jesus Christ to pay attention to their own work so they can support themselves. [13]Brothers and sisters, we can't allow ourselves to get tired of doing what is right. [GW]