

I. Introduction:

A. Twenty-five years ago, two friends and I almost started a magazine called Monday: The Intersection of Faith and Work.

1. I had spent eight years as a college pastor and was now working as a management consultant and I was waking up to the fact that the church was not helping me enough to think biblically and clearly about Monday through Friday. That was feeling like a big miss. And so along with two friends – Gary a writer and Bill, a business guy who had just sold a small grocery store chain and was Executive in Residence at Regent College – we set out to start a magazine about work.

2. And one day as we approached the launch, we were meeting to look at the mockup of the first issue. And as we were working on it, my assistant walked in and said, “you might want to take a look at this.” And she handed me a copy of the inaugural issue of a magazine called Faith at Work, and it was doing exactly what we were setting out to do. Exactly, only better.

a) I had a couple big white boards in my office. And on one of them we had all these ideas for content. For the first issue, I had interviewed Max Dupree – former CEO of Herman Miller, which was Fortune Magazine’s best company to work for. He was a thoughtful Christ-follower. I had an interview with him – and we had a list of others we were set to interview. They had a few of them in the issue and everyone else on our list lined up.

b) We had ideas for future articles – they had some of them listed in their table of contents most of the others listed under “Coming Issues.”

c) We had a list of companies we planned to contact to run ads – they had the ads

d) The killer was that we had a cartoon that showed the disciples saying, “we’ll follow you anywhere, we just want to know about the 401K plan. They had the same cartoon only instead of asking about a 401K they were asking about medical benefits.

3. I said it was exactly like ours, only better. Ours was 24 pages and two color. Theirs was 48 pages and full color.

B. We looked at the publication for a minute and then Gary said, “I trust you guys, but I also have to think that one of you sold the other two of us out.” He then said he was out and got up and left.

C. So when Ben came to me a year ago – Ben (used to be CP) and suggested this series – which he launched us into this new series called, Monday: The Intersection of Faith and Work. No, he named it, “There is Work to be Done.” But it is the same thing. It is designed to help us think about Monday through Friday.

D. As you hopefully know, this series dovetails with an aspect of the new Lakelight Institute:

1. Ben – who used to be the campus pastor at the Lake Forest campus. And who before that was a Vice President for Enrollment at Trinity.

2. Ben – who has a PhD in Leadership Studies – (and who is temporarily doing some of Anson’s job) – is the Executive Director of the Lakelight Institute, and in addition to providing opportunities for discipleship at a deeper level and forums in which to think about public theology – the application of faith and biblical thinking about issues, there is this idea about helping you think biblically about your vocation.

E. This series is based on few ideas:

1. That because you matter – because you were made by God in his image, because you have value, because God loves you - everything about you matters to God. Including your day job. Your work matters to God.
2. Secondly, work is good. It's a get to not a have to. We are given the opportunity to create and build and serve – to do things that matter. Work is a good thing. It was in place before the fall.
3. But, number three - work is hard because it is broken. Work is cursed. In Genesis 3:17, God says to Adam: “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food.”
 - a) We used to live in a Garden. Life used to be easy – now because of our sin, everything is broken. Things break and plans go awry and numbers do not add up and staff get out of alignment and clients have impossible expectations and some one beats you to the market with your great idea.
 - b) Everyone here knows that our days are often hard.
 - c) I feel very fortunate to get to do what I do. I get to work with great people on things I think matter.
 - d) And for the most part, I would do what I do even if no one paid me. But there are times when it's a grind. There are parts of my job I would not do if I was not getting paid.
 - e) If you like 80 percent of your job, you have won the job lottery. I am there. But there is the twenty percent.
4. Number four: God has gifted us in various ways that reflect who He is so we can partner with him in ways that matter.
 - a) God made the world to need work. He could have made it complete, but it needs ongoing cultivation. That's our job.
 - b) And one of the consequences of sin is a new type of work that is needed to combat the consequences of sin. Much of the work we do is a response to sin's consequences – responding to sin is big business (police, military, cybersecurity, fraud, alarm system companies.... and the work will talk about today around injustice.

- II. We've anchored this series in the Psalms. We are looking at attributes of God from the Psalms and then looking at how they point to the kind of things we need to do.
 - A. Last week, Ben spoke from Psalm 65 and focused on Goodness. God's goodness and how we imitate and reflect that in the creating new value, fixing broken things, or buying/selling a goods and services.
 - B. Today I am focusing on justice from Psalm 89.
 - C. We could have easily focused on work by looking to the parables – because 27 of the 32 of them refer to work in some way. They are based on work or full of work images, which – by the way – doesn't just refer to what we do for money.
- III. If you want to turn in your Bible's to Psalm 89, I am going to read verses 14 – 16.
 - A. This is a Psalm of David. It opens with a call to worship.
 1. It opens with a call to praise. A call to sing.

- a) Which I am doing more of. Or have someone do for me. Listen to a praise song. I feel like during this moment when so many people are going negative, when there are so many amplifiers
2. There is some reflection on the Covenant God made with David.
 3. There is praise for God's faithfulness.
 4. And a reflection on the vision of what God is calling us to and pointing us towards. Then we get this in verses 14-16
 5. V14: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. ¹⁵Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness.
- B. It is verse 15 that I want to key in on: "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;" The ones who are blessed are those who "celebrate your righteousness."
- C. I want us to think about righteousness and its sister term, justice – two big ideas that defy being reduced to a list of rules or set of bullet points.
- D. They are concepts rooted in the character of God that we see over and over again in the Bible.
1. I chose Psalm 89. There were a lot of other Psalms I could have turned to: Psalm 7, 11, 35 and a dozen more.
 2. We could have gone to the prophets
 - a) In Isaiah 58 God lets the Jews have it because – although they are being religious and seeking him (every day, he says) and trying to please him and fasting (they get credit for a lot of things) – but, God says: No. I am not answering your prayers because you are missing my heart. Verse 6 is key: ⁶"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"
 - b) We see the same thing in Isaiah we have his comments in Is. 1:16
 - (1) ¹⁷Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.
 - c) We could have gone with Micah 6 – in response to the question, "What is expected of us?" – the answer that is given is to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.
- E. What we see in all of these places is that justice as God defines it is big. One of the reasons we see so much fighting these days is because there are so many different theories about justice
1. Michael Sandal – a Harvard professor and the author of: *Justice, What's the Right Thing To Do?*, notes that there are rival theories of justice.
 2. There is a libertarian theory that focuses on equal opportunity only. There is a Distributist – which is all about redistributing assets. There is a virtue based model, which is all about giving people what they deserve.
- F. In *Generous Justice*, Tim Keller argues that the Bible's definition is bigger. It is based on:
1. It Equal treatment for all. Equal opportunity for all with a special concern for the poor – for those who lack power.

- a) Prov. 31:8-9 – speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.
 - b) Zech: 7: 9-10: “This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. ¹⁰ Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’”
 - 2. This is big deal, because God identifies with the poor. In Prov. 14 he says if you insult the poor you insult me and in Prov. 19 he says, “if you give to the poor you give to me.”
 - a) In other ancient cultures God were identified with the top. The reason people were at top was because God put them there.
- IV. I could go on – naming chapter and verse.
- A. We could jump to the New Testament
 - 1. James calls faith without words dead – and admonishes us to care for those who are struggling.
 - 2. I John 3:17-18: If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?
- V. I do not think I need to do much here. You understand that:
- A. God cares about justice. That He hates injustice. And that we need to:
 - 1. help those who are struggling (To quote Nicholas Wolterstorff – the Yale philosopher – the Bible makes it clear that we are “to pay particular attention to concerns of the ‘quartet of the vulnerable’: widows, orphans, poor, and resident aliens).
 - 2. and to fix broken systems.
 - B. And you all know that all of this is talk about justice is hyper-charged political cannon fodder today.
 - C. There are intense fights over definitions of words like justice. And what is meant by systems. And the difference between equality and equity.
 - D. Everyone here knows that our courts and our laws are now very politicized.
 - E. Good night, there are now debates over whether democracy is good. Whether the Constitution is good.
- VI. This work is hard because there is so much contention. This work is hard because there is so much pain. Two weeks ago, I went on a bit of a rant on this. It was my “stop mainlining the news and spend more time in the book.” If you are anxious or angry you are doing something wrong.
- A. You need to have a sense of God’s sovereign control. You need to go through the day confident that nothing in Heaven will change no matter who wins the midterms, no matter what Putin does, or Xi, or Elon Musk. That our well being is grounded in God’s love and Christ’s death and that alongside love we are supposed to be known for peace – for not panicking, because God is bigger than whatever set of problems we are facing. I said – stop spending so much time staring at your problems and spend more time meditating on the Word of God.
- VII. This week I have been saying a few other things:
- A. Please understand that it’s all a bit more complicated and nuanced than you think. When it comes to justice, there is one group saying, “it’s all about systems.” The systems are broken. And another group is saying, it is all about individual responsibility. And I am

saying, “It is not ALL about either of those. Both sides have points to make.” I have been asking people if they realize that win everything

B. And three – we cannot retreat. We cannot run and hide. We are called to be salt and light. What that looks like can be hard to figure out on specific issues in real time. But somewhere between

C. Part of what is going wrong is that we have lost the ability to have any nuance. Both sides are becoming louder and more

VIII. What I want to do today is thank those of you who are fighting it and invite more of you to join in. I am thinking in particular about: legislators and attorneys, judges and police, social workers and the military and journalists. People who are trying to address issues of justice.

A. At the heart of every government there is a justice system. At least, there is a department of justice.

1. There are laws and courts and jails and regulatory agencies.

2. There are people who monitor and enforce the law.

3. There are people who try to help others navigate the system.

4. And alongside it there are people – like journalist and activists – trying to help others know what is going on and exposing problems.

B. I want to thank those of you who are working in any of these arenas and I want to invite others in.

IX. As you may know, for close to ten years, one of the ministries we have operated is the Justice Center. Regina Morgan – who attends the Crossroads campus – led the drive to start it. Its mission has been to ?????

A. A year ago, Regina stepped down (she is now on the board for Renew, working with David Weil on Matthew Homes and job creation). Al Lee – who along with his wife, Misun – attend to Vernon Hills campus – who was completing two terms as an elder stepped in to lead the group now. I’ve asked Al to share a couple stories.

B. MJW: What is the Justice Center:

C. A: The Justice Center is part of a national movement of churches that are working to provide legal services to those who cannot afford it. We help people who have nowhere to turn for legal help because they cannot afford legal fees.

D. MJW: Give me some examples:

E. AL: Like - Leah (not her name) whose landlord refuses to return her security deposit. Or Hannah a mother two young toddlers, whose husband moved out, and served her divorce papers. Or Hagar, whose husband a U.S. citizen just passed away, and needs to figure out how to renew her immigration status.

F. MJW: How great is the need?

G. Al: It’s significant. If you commit a crime, you have a right to a free attorney. If you are a victim of a crime - fraud, abuse, or exploitation - you have no such right. The Justice Center seeks to provide legal counsel and care to individuals who are often overwhelmed by the system.

1. A while ago I helped Joseph and Mary – they had lost their jobs during the pandemic. He had been working in a restaurant. She had been cleaning houses. They had fallen behind on their car payments, and their car was repossessed. They still owed money on the car. They were overwhelmed. She was in tears.

2. And they had paid for some really bad legal advice. They were being taken advantage of. We were able to help them. I’ll spare you the legal reasoning. Let me just say, Mary was in tears at the end of the meeting because we had helped them and provided hope.

- H. MJW: Where is the Justice Center?
- I. Al: We meet here on the first Saturday of the month. Clients show up from 9 – 12. Our hope is to grow so we can offer services at all four campuses.
- J. MJW: Do you need to be an attorney to help?
- K. Al: No. We have some great attorneys – and can use more. (A few guys recently retired but applied to maintain their licenses under Supreme Court rule in order to help at the Justice Center). So, this is a great opportunity for lawyers and paralegals to volunteer. But we need other people. People who can ??????
- L. MJW: What do you say to someone who wants to volunteer, or someone who needs legal services but cannot afford them – or knows someone who needs legal help but cannot afford it?
- M. Al: Go to the website where you can schedule an appointment, or sign up for online training to become a volunteer.”
- X. Thanks Al. May you and the Justice Center Team grow and find great joy in the important work you are doing. This was one of the surprises to me when I first got into ministry.
- A. The system worked for me.
- B. I wasn't scared of it.
- C. I could afford it and mostly understand it – or get with people who did. I had lots of friends who became attorneys.
- D. What I saw after I started pastoring were people who did not have those advantages and needed help.
- E. Very glad for those of you who are serving in this way.
- XI. In just a minute I am going to pray for all those working in this space. Before we do that, let me share three quick things:
- A. Thanks to those of you who are working in this arena. Please, do not grow weary of doing good. It is exhausting work, but it is God's work and so necessary.
- B. I want us all to be encouraged – one day, our just King will return and make all things right. We will all thrive in a setting where sin is no more. Where we are not broken. Where systems are not broken. Where God is the just ruler and king.
- C. And realize, we not only get justice, we get grace
1. If you are at all alert to what is really going on, you realize that we do not actually want justice. We want mercy and grace.
 2. I do not want justice. I want a savior – and that is what we get.
 3. God in his great love, sent his Son to pay our debt. God doesn't act as though sin doesn't matter. It does. We are sinners and our sin must be addressed. What He does is pay our debt to restore justice. It would be unjust of God to not address our sin. So Christ pays it.
- D. Let me go back – again – to I John 1:9: If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness
1. Please note – what you might be hearing is, if we confess God is going to be unjust and not hold our sins against us. But that is not what it says: If we confess, God will be faithful and just and forgive us – because if we confess, when we become a Christ follower – Christ pays our debt. So, it would be unjust for God to demand a second payment.
- E. There are three responses to today:
1. Some of you need to decide that you are going to look for ways to promote justice.

2. Some of you need to be encouraged – reminded that your work matters to God.
 3. Some of you need to realize that what you need most of all, is grace. You do not want to leave today without talking with one of the staff about becoming a Christ follower.
- XII. Let me close with a prayer for Judges and lawyers and others working in this justice space.
- A. Dear Father, the Giver of the Law:
 - B. We pray for those who are working to promote justice – for earthly judges and lawyers, for social workers and legislators and journalist. For those looking to partner with you in crafting a more just world.
 - C. We know that this is your heart. We know that you are the giver of the original law. We are looking for your love and your just rule to spread. We pray for wisdom and energy to that end.
 - D. Heavenly Father, we are aware that your law exists to show us our sin and our need for a savior. None are righteous, but through the blood of Christ, we are redeemed.
 - E. God, we acknowledge that those who are given the task of applying the law will be tainted by their own fallenness and sin, and so we pray that you will give them wisdom. We pray that they would view every party who comes before them as created in your image and that you would give them discernment for the decisions they make that impact these lives. We pray they would treat all parties with the respect that is due to children of God.
 - F. God let those who are part of the justice system behave justly in all they do, love mercy in the way you love mercy, and walk humbly with you as they go about their daily roles. Let their demeanor point others to you. Let them be instruments of your peace and justice. As long as there is sin, we know that we need earthly judges. But we eagerly await a time when judging between parties will no longer be required upon your return.
 - G. In Jesus' name, Amen.