

ALL THINGS NEW

Title: Part 3 – “Nothing Good Gets Wasted”

Date: January 18, 2025

Great to see everyone here today! A huge welcome to those joining us online or through our app—you're absolutely part of what's happening here, and we're grateful you're spending your time with us. If there's anything you need prayer for this week, please reach out. We'd love to walk with you through whatever you're facing.

Today we're going to look at several passages of Scripture that all point to the same incredible truth. The first is in Matthew 19, verse 28. Jesus is talking to His disciples about the future:

²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the **RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS**, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Second, 1 Corinthians 15, verse 58. Paul closes his massive chapter on resurrection with this:

⁵⁸ 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**.

And finally, Revelation 21, verses 24 – 26. John is describing the New Jerusalem:

²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will **BRING THEIR SPLENDOR** into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

In case you are just jumping in with us, we are in the third week of a collection of messages called, “**All Things New**,” and so far we've established two foundational truths for our hope. Who could use some hope today?

Well, in week one, we learned that God isn't planning to destroy Earth and whisk us away to some ethereal place in a galaxy far, far away. God's plan for creation since the fall has been to RENEW it. The word in Revelation 21 is kainos **{KY-nos}** and it means renewed, restored, made like new again. Not neos **{NEH-os}**, which means brand new from scratch. God's doing a renovation of creation, not a demolition.

Week two, we discovered that you're getting your body back. Not some ghostly spiritual existence—a real, physical, perfected body on a real, physical, perfected Earth. Everything you love about being human will be there, only without the sin, suffering, and death.

AND if that seems like really new or bizarre news, you have to go back and watch part 1 and 2 because: **If you can't imagine heaven, then it cannot produce hope in you.**

Which brings us to today's message. Today I want to preach a message I'm calling:

Nothing Good Gets Wasted

Let me start with a question that haunts a lot of people, even if they don't say it out loud: What's the point?

You spent thirty years building a business—what's the point if it all ends when you die? You poured your heart into raising kids—what's the point if this life is all there is? You created art, wrote songs, built things, loved people, made a difference in your community—what's the point if none of it matters in eternity?

Here's what most Christians have been taught, either explicitly or implicitly: This world is temporary. Heaven is what matters. So don't get too attached to anything here. Your real life is later. This is just the waiting room.

And if that's true—if Earth really is just a disposable waiting room—then honestly, what's the point of excellence? Why should you care about your work? Why pour yourself into creativity? Why invest in culture or community or making anything beautiful? If it's all going to burn anyway, why not just do the bare minimum and coast until Jesus comes back?

I've heard Christians say things like:

- “I can't wait to leave this world behind.”
- “Our body is just a shell; our souls are all that matters.”
- “It's all gonna burn anyway.”

And if evacuation theology is true—if the plan is to escape Earth for a non-physical heaven—then those statements make perfect sense. But they also drain all meaning from your daily life! They make your work meaningless! Creativity and beauty pointless! Your relationships temporary!

But what if that entire framework is wrong? What if God's plan isn't to destroy everything you've built, created, and loved—but to REDEEM it, PURIFY it, and PRESERVE it forever?

That's what these three passages are telling us and if properly understood it changes everything about how you live, work and rest in the here and now. You could put it this way:

Our eschatology shapes our ethics.

Eschatology is a technical term used in theology that basically means what we believe about the end times. SO, how we view the end—the goal, the climax, what this whole story is leading up to—shapes our ethics, how we live today.

It shapes what we do and don't do for a living. What we value and what we don't care about. What we do or don't spend money on. How many hours we work each week. How often we rest, take a Sabbath, take a vacation.

If you think that you're en route to heaven—a place up in the sky, somewhere else, with no body, and a “spiritual” existence—then it's hard not to feel a sense of meaninglessness about your job or career or justice or cultural renewal in this world.

BUT if you read the Scriptures and wake up to the reality that our hope is grounded in resurrection, in the New Earth, that Jesus is making “All Things New” then that changes everything. Especially how we view work.

For example. If this is true then it means we don't have to get it all done now! We don't have to work ourselves into the ground, until we're scraping off the bone and there's nothing left. If you're a follower of Jesus then we have all eternity to live into God's work! We'll live another day, another week, another millennium. Yes, time is a precious commodity, but we're filthy rich! We have plenty of it!

Do you see what I mean and how this changes everything? What I'm getting at is all this eschatology, all this talk about the future, about resurrection and the age to come on the New Earth, it should have a massive effect on our work in the here and now.

There's so much we could say about this, but here are four thoughts if you are taking notes today:

▷ **Good work is worthwhile even if it's just for this age.**

Whatever you do—cooking, building, teaching, writing, mothering, project managing, dog training—if you do it as an act of worship to God and an expression of love and service to humanity, that's enough. Work isn't a means to an end; it IS an end.

I cannot emphasize this enough. Most people don't actually believe their work matters in the here and now. For its own sake. But it does!

If all you do is fix a car to get somebody on the road, or set up a mortgage for somebody to buy a house, or sell a jacket to keep somebody warm, that matters, all by itself. And it's enough.

Let me say it again: Your work matters RIGHT NOW, not just because of what it might become later, but because it's good right now.

When you serve someone, that matters in the moment. When you create something beautiful, it has value immediately. When you solve a problem, you've made the world better today. When you love your neighbor through your work, that love counts now.

Sometimes we beat ourselves up by thinking, “My work isn't building the Kingdom. I'm not in ministry like you Brian. I'm just a [fill in the blank].” BUT listen to me: you don't need to spiritualize your work or add some eternal significance to it to make it worthwhile. The work itself—done well, done with integrity, done as service to others—is enough!

Too many Christians have bought into this lie that only “spiritual” work matters. Only ministry counts. Only evangelism is eternal. Only missions matter. Everything else is just killing time until Jesus comes back. BUT that's not what the Bible teaches!

God created work BEFORE the fall. Genesis 2:15 says:

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Work is part of God's good creation. It's not a result of the curse; the curse is that work became frustrating, exhausting, and often futile. Thorns and thistles. Sweat and strain. You work all day and wonder if you accomplished anything. That's the curse. BUT the work itself? Work was in paradise as part of God's plan.

And when you as an image bearer of God bring order to chaos, serve others, create value, solve problems, create beauty—that's good! It matters. It reflects God's character. And it's enough, all by itself.

SO, stop waiting for your work to feel “spiritual” enough! Stop feeling guilty that you're not in full-time ministry! Stop thinking your job is just a paycheck until you can do something that “really matters!”

Your work matters NOW! Today! This moment! Not just because of what it might become in eternity, but because it's good right now! It serves people! It reflects God's image! It makes the world better!

If you're a nurse, you're bringing healing and comfort today! If you're a mechanic, you're keeping people safe on the road today! If you're a teacher, you're shaping minds and opening possibilities today! If you're a parent staying home with kids, you're investing in eternal souls today!

It all matters! Not someday! But NOW! *{Tell two people, it matters now...}* Here's my second point:

▷ Our work in this life is practice for our work in the coming life.

This is where it gets really exciting: In one sense, what we do now matters, all by itself. We don't need to add anything onto it or spice it up. But in another sense, it's practice.

The great philosopher and theologian Dallas Willard once said this life is: “**Training for reigning.**” AND as cheesy as that sounds, he's spot-on. Right now, we are learning the skills we'll need forever in the New Earth. We are training for reigning in God's Kingdom.

Think about it this way: The Bible opens with God giving humans a vocation, a calling to rule, to look after His creation and make it flourish, to bring order to chaos. And after a long, drawn-out detour through human history, the Bible ends with that vision finally coming to pass and even going forward.

Revelation—the last book in the Bible—is filled with royal language, here are a few snapshots:

- He has made us to be a kingdom and priests. (Rev 1:6)
- I will give the right to sit with me on my throne. (Rev 3:21)
- They shall reign on the earth. (Rev 5:10)
- They will reign with him for a thousand years. (Rev 20:6)
- They will reign for ever and ever. (Rev 22:5)

So, our future hope isn't only that Jesus will rule the universe. It is, but it's also that we'll rule right at His side in the Kingdom. Meaning that God is looking for people He can rule the world with right now. AND our work is practice for that!

We are learning how to fight laziness with hard work, and how to fight workaholism with Sabbath. Learning how to handle money and sex and power. Learning how to deal with technology and information in the digital age. Learning how to live over the earth and not get crushed under its weight or fall prey to its seduction.

AND here's what's fascinating: I would argue that we're not just learning the skills of CHARACTER, but we're learning the skills of the CRAFT.

Isaiah and Amos were both pretty clear in the Old Testament. They saw the renewal of all things and said we will “build houses” and “plant gardens” in the age to come. Theoretically, that means we'll need architects and contractors and electricians and plumbers and cabinet makers and furniture makers and interior designers and on down the list. We will need farmers and gardeners and machine operators and shop owners to sell the harvests.

SO, as you go to work each day and hone your skills, you're not just making a better world now—you're learning the skills—one day in the future—to make the best world!

I'm saying whoever you become in character and skill will carry over into the next life. The saying “You can't take it with you” may be true of stuff—your car or that sweet new pair of shoes—but it's definitely misleading. You will take the person you become with you into God's future. And who you become is your most valuable asset.

Think about what that means for your work: every time you practice excellence, you're training for eternity. Every time you solve a complex problem, you're developing skills you'll use forever. Every time you learn something new, you're expanding your capacity for the work God has for you in the age to come. That difficult project you're working on? That's building your character AND your skill set for ruling with Christ. That class you're taking? That's preparation. That craft you're honing? That's practice for the work you'll do when creation is finally set free.

Maybe you're a cook now, and you're learning how to combine flavors and create experiences that bring people joy. Who's to say you won't be doing that forever on the New Earth? Maybe perfecting recipes not for a restaurant but for celebrations in the kingdom?

Maybe you're in IT, and you're learning how systems work, how to solve problems, how to make things run smoothly. Why wouldn't those skills translate to managing complex systems in God's renewed creation?

Maybe you're a craftsman, learning woodworking or metalworking or some other trade. You're developing the patience, the precision, the creativity to make beautiful, functional things. Those are eternal skills!

So, stop thinking your job is just a paycheck! Stop viewing your work as something to endure until retirement! Stop believing that only “ministry” is preparing you for eternity! Every day you go to work, you're in training! You're developing skills, building character, learning to rule! You're becoming the person God will entrust with greater responsibility forever!

So, give yourself fully to the work! Learn everything you can! Develop your craft! Build your character! Fight laziness! Fight workaholism! Learn to rest! Learn to work! Because you're not just working for now—you're **TRAINING FOR REIGNING!**

Randy Alcorn puts it this way:

"We won't be sitting on clouds with nothing to do. We'll be exercising dominion over God's creation, using our gifts and abilities in ways we can't even imagine now."

Think about what that means. Right now, you're limited. Limited time. Limited skill. Limited resources. You have ideas you'll never get to pursue. Projects you'll never finish. Abilities you'll never fully develop. BUT on the New Earth... Unlimited time. Perfected abilities. Infinite resources. And you'll have forever to create, to innovate, to make beautiful things that glorify God and bring joy to others.

BUT here's where it gets really wild and I have been hinting at this each week but, number 3:

▷ **Some of your work will actually live on.**

Some of the things you build and create and accomplish will be purified and in the New Earth. In Revelation 14 we read this:

¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their **WORKS FOLLOW THEM.**"

Follow them where? Into the New Earth when Jesus makes “All Things New.” The word “works” in the original language can mean work, but it can also be translated as occupation. Some of our work and some of our occupation will follow us, past death and into the renewal of all things.

Later, in Revelation 21, that we read in the beginning, we see the Garden city, the New Jerusalem, and John writes:

²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

The glory and honor of the nations, what is that? That's human culture. That's art, music, architecture, literature, scientific discoveries, technological innovations. And John is saying all that glory—purified of sin—will be brought into the New Creation.

Here's what that means practically: Everything excellent you create in this life that glorifies God will somehow be preserved and perfected in the next!

Miroslav Volf, a brilliant Croatian philosopher/theologian from Yale, puts it this way:

“The noble products of human ingenuity, whatever is beautiful, true and good in human cultures, will be cleansed from impurity, perfected, and transfigured to become a part of God's new creation. They will form the 'building materials,' from which the glorified world will be made.”

It's all the graffiti, the evil, ugly stuff, that will disappear forever. But the good, the true, the beautiful—somehow, somehow, Scripture seems to point that it will be purified and preserved.

I think of 1 Corinthians 3 gives us the best paradigm for this. The Apostle Paul writes: (v.10, 12-15)

But each one should build with care. ¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

There's a lot of human work that honestly will not survive the Day of the Lord, stuff like:

- War
- Slavery
- Exploitation of the poor
- Corrupt bureaucracy
- Opulent waste
- Pornography
- Fentanyl
- Human trafficking
- Greed
- Gluttony

All this stuff will be “burned up.” And people who gave their life to “wood, hay or straw,” will have nothing to show for all their time, effort and energy. But on the flip side, Paul's hope is that some human work will survive judgment and go on to find a place in the New Earth. That somehow—and I have no idea how—all our work that is “gold, silver, and costly stones,” the kind of work that matters, will follow us into the age to come. God will find a way to take it, cleanse it, and integrate it into His new world.

New Testament scholar N.T. Wright said this way:

"What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—will last into God's future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether. They are part of what we may call building for God's kingdom."

I love that language, “building FOR God's kingdom.” We can't build the kingdom—only Jesus can do that. But we can build FOR the kingdom. We can make bricks, and God, the master builder, can find a way to arrange them into His masterpiece.

Touch your neighbor and tell them, “Nothing good gets wasted!”

If that doesn't make you want to get really good at your job, I have no clue what will! You're not just working for a paycheck! You're not just passing time! You're creating something that has the potential to last forever!

So, build with GOLD! Build with SILVER! Build with COSTLY STONES! Create things that are good, true, and beautiful! Work with excellence! Pursue quality over quantity! Make things that reflect God's glory!

Because the Day is coming when fire will test the quality of your work! And everything that's truly good will survive! Everything that's truly beautiful will be preserved! Everything that's truly excellent will find a place in the New Earth!

One more:

▷ Good work done in this age will be rewarded in the age to come.

There is far more continuity between this age and the age to come than most of us think. There is a direct correlation between how we live now and how we will live forever. Or to be more precise, between how we rule now and how much we will rule over forever.

This is why such a huge chunk of Jesus' parables were about work, commerce, trade, money, management, employer-employee relationships, and so on. A lot of them end by basically saying that how you work now has a direct effect on how you will work in the future.

For example, in Luke 19 Jesus tells a parable about the “man of noble birth,” meaning a king, who went on a long journey. Before he left, he gave each of his servants a mina, which is a large sum of money. When he came back, he wanted an accounting for his investment. The first servant comes up and says, “Sir, your mina has earned ten more.” And what does the king say? Look:

¹⁷ “Well done, my good servant!” his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

In other words, responsibility now, MORE responsibility later. There is a direct connection between how we work now and the kind of work we will do forever.

Of course, we read this and assume that “take charge of ten cities” is a metaphor, and it probably is. But isn't this what Adam was supposed to do all along? Rule? Take a garden and make a city? What if it's not a metaphor?

Either way, the point still stands: The reward for work well-done in this age isn't a mansion and a Maserati in heaven—as if the best God can do is acquiesce to the American dream. NO! It's more work and more responsibility in God's Kingdom.

AND that should excite you! Curse-free, exhilarating, satisfying work. And responsibility, a sense that what you do is important in the grand scheme of things!

Even if your work now doesn't feel that way. Even if you're a sanitation engineer or a gofer on a construction crew or housekeeping for a hotel or a bagger at Publix. Maybe you love what you do, maybe you hate it. Maybe you can change what you do, maybe you're stuck. But either way, you can do it for a reward!

I love what Paul writes to the slaves in Colossae:

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Now, Paul's not condoning slavery here. Slavery in the ancient Mediterranean was totally different than the African American slave trade, or the human trafficking going on right now. It wasn't based on ethnicity, and it usually wasn't for life.

BUT still, can you think of a worse job? It was probably filled with the mundane—cleaning the floor, washing the dishes, weeding around the house, working in the field—with no control over what you do or don't do every day.

That's who Paul wrote this to and says God will reward you for all work done in his name! Even if it's not sexy or glamorous or hip or prestigious. Even if your work is washing dirty dishes in the back room of a cheap restaurant, it will be rewarded as long as it's done for Jesus. Not just to get a paycheck by doing the bare minimum until the end of your shift, but as an act of worship and service to God and humanity.

Because if you're faithful with your one mina now, then in the world to come, you will RULE. You will finally get to do the kind of work you love.

Church, do you understand what this means? It means EVERY act of service counts! EVERY moment of faithfulness is recorded! EVERY time you work with excellence when nobody's watching, God sees it!

You think you're just flipping burgers? No! You're serving Jesus! You think you're just filing paperwork? No! You're building an inheritance! You think you're just changing diapers? No! You're investing in eternity!

SO, work with ALL YOUR HEART! Give it EVERYTHING you've got! Pursue EXCELLENCE! Practice INTEGRITY! Love through your LABOR! Because one day—ONE DAY—Jesus is going to look at you and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful with a little, so I'm putting you in charge of MUCH! Come and share your master's happiness!”

And you'll finally understand that nothing was wasted. Nothing was in vain. Every moment of faithfulness, every act of service, every effort for excellence—it ALL mattered. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Let me close with a story that captures everything we've been talking about today.

In the winter of 1941, a French composer named Olivier Messiaen {Oh-liv-ee-AY MES-ee-on} was captured by the Nazis and put in Stalag 8-A, a concentration camp in Görlitz, Germany. While in prison, facing a brutally cruel lifestyle, he spent time reading the four Gospels and Revelation. As a follower of Jesus, he was somehow filled with hope for the world, right in the middle of hell on Earth.

When he realized there were three other famous musicians in the camp, he found four instruments—a cello with a missing string, a beat-up violin, a well-worn clarinet, and a piano with keys that stuck together—and he composed an incredible piece of chamber music. He called it “Quartet for the End of Time.” The New Yorker later called it “the most ethereally beautiful music of the twentieth century.”

They first played it in January, right in the middle of the concentration camp, to hundreds of prisoners and guards, in the freezing cold. Messiaen later said:

“The cold was excruciating, the Stalag buried under snow, the four performers played on broken down instruments... but never have I had an audience who listened with such rapt attention.”

I tell you this story because I can't think of a more dramatic or more fitting picture of the kind of work we are to do on this side of resurrection.

We are the people of the future in the present.

Paul said, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” New creation is here now; it's bursting out through the cracks in the pavement, and it's starting with us! We're the vanguard, the advance sign of what's coming for the whole world.

SO, we work in the present world—right in the middle of all the chaos and entropy and suffering and pain—for a glimpse of the future world, set free from evil and death itself.

AND the hope is that as we do whatever it is we do, people will see our work, and, shivering in the cold, will come a little closer, listen to the music, and maybe, just maybe, start to see that in the middle of all the sorrow and emptiness and trauma of this life, something new is brewing, seeping up through the ground, breaking in.

Some of you came in today feeling like your life doesn't matter. Like you're just going through the motions. Like nothing you do makes a difference.

BUT I'm here to tell you: If you're in Christ, EVERYTHING you do in His name has eternal significance. Every. Single. Thing. That job you think is mundane? It matters. That hobby you think is just for fun? It's preparation. Those relationships you're building? They're forever.

Nothing good is wasted. Nothing true is lost. Nothing beautiful disappears.

So, give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. Create beautiful things. Love sacrificially. Build for the kingdom. Because you know—you KNOW—that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Let's pray.