

Sermon Transcript

May 3, 2015



Five Hats We Wear

A Royal Rep

2 Kings 6:15-23 and 2 Corinthians 3:17-4:18

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on May 3, 2015, at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio copy of the sermon on CD is available by request at (860) 563-8286. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at www.wethefc.com.

Sermon Text

2 Kings 6:15-23

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. ¹⁸ And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, "Please strike this people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. ¹⁹ And Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria.

²⁰ As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." So the LORD opened their eyes and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. ²¹ As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?" ²² He answered, "You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." ²³ So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.

2 Corinthians 3:17-4:18

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

¹ Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves,

but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

¹³ Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Introduction

Over the past three weeks, we identified three major themes as we try to understand how our faith informs our work. As we look at our jobs through the lens of the gospel, we are discovering that Sunday has everything to do with Monday to Friday. Here is the foundation we have set in place for this series on "Work and Faith."

- Work is anchored in God. God is a working God and we were created for work. We partner with what God is doing in this world through the jobs we do. When we make things, when we sustain and provide things for the common good and when we heal and restore things; we are doing the work of God in this world. Therefore, your job has purpose and meaning.
- Work is not always easy. In a broken and fallen world, we discover that often work is "working against us." And so your job can seem like drudgery or a source of toil and pain. But as Christians we recognize that those are the

things that God uses to do his work in us. And so we recognize that the difficulties that come with work are what God is using to do a work in us.

- Finally, we discovered last week that work is a place where God wants to do a work through us. And so we talked about how to position ourselves in the work place. We are to be “set apart” and to be “set among.” To be “set apart” means that because of Jesus in our lives, we ought to be different than those around us. To be “set among” means that we are truly engaged in the work and in the lives of the people we rub shoulders with during the week.

These three thoughts will anchor our conversation for the rest of this series.

- Through your job you partner with what God is doing in this world
- Your work is a place where God works on you
- Your work is a place where God wants to work through you

Sometimes, it is hard to see how God fits into your job. As I have engaged in conversation with some of you, I have heard of some really hard things that make your job difficult. Whether it is problems with management, the way people treat one another, attitudes, unrealistic expectations, laziness, lack of job security, moral and ethical issues . . . there are some really hard and difficult circumstances tugging at you and making Mondays frustrating. We need eyes of faith to be able to see how God fits into our Mondays. We need eyes of faith to see how we fit into Monday.

We need to experience what the servant of Elisha experienced in 2 Kings 6. The story goes like this. The king of Syria was leading a military campaign against the people of Israel. Every time he made a strategic move, it seemed as though the King of Israel knew exactly what the king of Syria was up to. The king of Syria began to suspect that he had a spy in his ranks and he wanted to find out who was leaking information to the king of Israel. Here is what he discovered. No one was leaking information. Instead, God was “leaking intelligence” to the prophet Elisha, who in turn was leaking intel to the king of Israel. When the king of Syria discovered that it was Elisha who was passing classified information to the king of Israel, he found out where Elisha was staying and he amassed a great army with horses and chariots and at night he surrounded the city of Dothan. It was his intent to silence that prophet.

Early in the morning, the servant of Elisha got up and went out of the city. He looked up and he saw this vast army surrounding the city of Dothan. One can only imagine how fearful that would cause a person to feel. He turns to Elisha in verse 15 and cries out, “*What shall we do?*” What can you do? But then the prophet said this, “*But do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*” That

must have sounded strange to the servant as he scanned the horizon one more time. All he saw in front of him was the army of Syria. And so the prophet prayed, “*O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.*” The next thing you know, the servant saw “*the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around.*” The army of heaven was with them and there was no need to fear. He just couldn’t see how God was present in what seemed to be a hopeless situation until God opened his eyes.

I wonder if we need the same thing when it comes to the workplace. Perhaps when you scan the horizon of your office or your shop or the cubicles or the classroom or the unending piles of laundry and dirty dishes or wherever you happen to work; it is hard for you to find God within the everyday circumstances of your workplace. Perhaps, when you scan this scene, all you see is the toil and the frustration. I wonder if we need God to open our eyes to what God is doing in us and through us in the context of our jobs. It took the prayer of Elisha to open the eyes of his servant to see the presence of God in this circumstance. My prayer is that through this series we would see how God is present in us and through us when we show up on Monday.

One of the ways to describe the different roles we occupy at our jobs is to use the word “hats.” We ask, “what hats do you wear at your job?” If you are at a small company, you may wear several “hats.” If you are at a large company, you may have one specific “hat” you wear. Over the next five weeks, I want to suggest “five different hats” we wear as Christians when we walk into the workplace. If we can keep these “hats” on our heads, I think it will go a long way to help us see the many ways God is with us and how God is working through us in the workplace.

Over the next five weeks, I am going to use five different baseball hats to describe the “hats” we wear as Christians when we step into the workplace. The first hat we put on belongs to the Kansas City Royals. Their logo is a “crown.” When we think of a crown, we think of a king. A crown is also a symbol for God, who rules over all things. So when you put this “hat” on, you are reminding yourself that you bear the image of God and you are a “Royal Rep” for God in the workplace. “The gospel transforms your perspective on work from being a source of toil and pain and frustration to become a way to reflect God’s image in your daily life.”¹ We need God to open our eyes to remind us that when we step into Monday, we bring the presence of God to others.

The Resume of a Royal Rep

In order to understand what it means to be a Royal Rep in the workplace, it would be good to think about what it means to bear the image of God. I would like to look at the “resume of a Royal Rep” through the lens of Creation, Fall, Jesus and Redemption.

Creation is always our starting point. We know, from the account of creation in Genesis 1-2 that man is the crowning point of God's creation. We were created in the image of God. We hear God say, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*" What does that mean? It means that out of all that God created in this world, we resemble God in this world. There are two main ways we resemble God in this world.

First of all, we represent God in this world. After it says that we were created in the image of God, it says that we are to "*have dominion*" over what God has created. In other words, we were created to be "Royal Reps." We serve God by "ruling" under God. Nancy Pearcey says this is "the first job description" ever posted. She goes on to say, "*be fruitful and multiply*" means to develop the social world, build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws. The second phrase, "*subdue the earth*" means to harness the natural world: plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music."² Through our actual jobs, we represent God in this world.

We also resemble God as "Royal Reps" through relationship. At creation, we were made to live in relationship with God. In fact, we were to live dependent upon God. And we were also designed for relationship with others. When God created us in his image, initially, there was harmony between God and man and between the man and the woman. This too, is how we resemble the Triune God in this world. It is called love.

The Fall tells us what is wrong with this world. At the heart of the fall of man is this notion that we don't want to be "Royal Reps." We want to be "Royalty!" And so as we shake ourselves free from the good rule of God in our lives, we still have the image of God stamped upon us. We still resemble God in the sense that we are "subduing" the earth. But his image in us is now distorted because it is not directed towards God. It is like David Brooks said in the *Op-Ed* piece I referred to last week from the *NY Times*. "We live in the culture of the Big Me."³ It is now all about "Me." Therefore, something like power is not something that is always directed for the common good. Instead, it is something that often corrupts. It was Lord Acton who said this, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." Add to all of this the many ways broken relationships show up in every corner of life. So yes, we can still see signs of the common grace and the common goodness of man that comes from being created in the image of God. And yet, there is an ever present evil and brokenness that pervades all of our best intentions. We are all victims and perpetrators of this broken world, where God's image in us is now marred.

Jesus steps into this brokenness and he brings real hope. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Jesus is referred to as "*the image of God.*" No doubt, a unique thing about Jesus is that he is both God and man. But when it comes to his humanity, it is not just that Jesus is fully

human. But to the fullest extent, Jesus is “true humanity.” Jesus is a picture of “perfect humanity.” Jesus is the perfect picture of what “*the image of God*” in man is to look like. Unlike Adam, the first man, Jesus lived in continual relationship with God and was fully obedient to God. He was also selfless in his love for others, reflecting the love of God the Father. So yes, because of this, he was able to atone for our sin. But in addition to that, he became the “new Adam.” He was the originator of a “new humanity.” Glenn Sunshine says of Jesus, “Humanity was made in the image of God and continues to bear it, but Jesus is preeminently the image of God, the one who is God’s definitive representative on earth . . . This makes him preeminent over the created order, the one who fully exercises the dominion given to humanity.”⁴ And so, as the perfect “*image of God*” Jesus is the true “Royal Rep” of God on earth.

Redemption, therefore, is not just about the forgiveness of sins. Instead, that is just the beginning of what Jesus has come to do in us. Through Jesus, yes, the guilt of our sin and our rebellion against God is removed. We just celebrated that at the communion table. But in addition to that, we also recognize that Jesus has conquered death. Through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we have the assurance that we too shall rise from the dead. But that is not all! Jesus is the gift that keeps on giving. Because Jesus has risen from the dead and because Jesus has dominion over all things, our hope is not just in the future and in heaven. But we also now have a present hope for this life. We now have the power to live the way we were made to live. In other words, we are empowered to carry out God’s mission and purpose in this world. That includes fulfilling our original calling on earth as “Royal Reps” to fill the earth and subdue it. We now bear the renewed *image of God* through the work of Jesus in our lives. That is why it says in 2 Corinthians 3:18 as we behold the glory of God, we “*are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*” In other words, we are looking more and more like Jesus.

So when you step into Monday, as a “Royal Rep” you are brining the very presence of God with you. It is not just the *image of God* stamped on you because of creation. That is something everyone has and it is a reason to treat everyone with dignity. In fact, James tells us in James 3 to watch our tongues and to mark our words. He says, “*with it we bless our Lord and Father and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.*” Thus, fallen man still bears the likeness of God and therefore is to be treated with dignity. But as someone who has come to faith in Christ, the *image of God* in us is a reference to the way Jesus is transforming our lives and the character of God and his love is now shining through us. In 2 Corinthians 4:6 it says, “*For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” When you go to work, you are a Royal Rep of Jesus Christ and you get to shine his love that transcends every circumstance.

A Royal Rep in the Ordinary

So how do we wear this hat on Monday? What does it look like to be a Royal Rep for Jesus in the workplace? It all sounds so lofty, this idea of “representing Jesus” in the workplace. But do you know what? This calling we have is actually found in the rather “ordinary” things of life. We are not being asked to do something “extraordinary” here. But I will say this, it is in the ordinary that God tends to do the extraordinary.

I think of Paul’s example in 2 Corinthians 4. Paul had a complicated history with the Corinthian church. There were some hard things he had to address with them and it led to some tension between them. Paul wrote them three letters to address these issues, we happen to have two of them. As a result of this complicated relationship this church, Paul came under attack. They questioned his motives. His authority as an apostle was brought into question. In essence, they were questioning his work.

As Paul defends himself in 2 Corinthians 4, I am struck by the nature of his appeal. It is the “ordinary” things of life like honesty, integrity, perseverance through adversity and selfless love for others that demonstrates the love and light of Jesus to others. He says in verse 2 that he “*renounced underhanded ways . . . refused to practice cunning . . . commending ourselves to everyone’s conscience.*” He operated with integrity. He was an example through the way he handled adversity and suffering. In verses 8-9 he says, “*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.*” He walked with great faith through adversity. And furthermore, he did all of this out of genuine love for others. He was selfless. He said in verse 15 that what he did was “*all for their sake.*” We wear this hat in the ordinary events of life. It is in these things we resemble Jesus and bear his image wherever we are.

In very simple terms, do you know what it means to wear this hat and be a Royal Rep in your place of employment? It simply means being fully present and ready to respond to what God is doing. Robert Alexander put it this way, “Jesus promises to be present with us and to work through us, so our task is to show up, pay attention to what he is doing, and apply his power and perspective to the work before us.”⁵

I think of the familiar story of the Good Samaritan. Do you know the setting of the story? Jesus is answering the question, “*Who is my neighbor?*” This question came up because he and a man of the law had agreed that the call of God is to love God and love your neighbor. So, “*who is my neighbor?*” And then Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. There is a man laying on the side of the road half dead because he had been mugged and beaten. Two men passed by and did nothing, but the Samaritan stopped

and helped this poor man. And so the point is that the one who proved to be the neighbor is the one who showed mercy. Think about that Samaritan. He was just going about the normal activities of the day. He was traveling from one place to the next. But in the ordinary course of affairs, he saw someone in need. He responded faithfully and unselfishly to the fact that God had put him there to meet that need. Alexander writes, “We reflect the image of God . . . when we pay attention to what God has us doing every day and care for others we meet in quiet, practical, selfless ways.”⁶ So you wear this hat and operate as a Royal Rep by simply being present and aware and ready to faithfully do the ordinary things of life, which quite frankly become extraordinary because they come from Jesus who is at work inside of us.

I like the way Tom Nelson puts it. “Everyday you arrive at work, an attitude arrives with you. Our attitudes are like the perfume or cologne we are wearing; we smell the fragrance when we first put it on, but others smell it throughout the day. The fragrance you are wearing at work, others are picking up. So what are those around you smelling? . . . The fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”⁷ That is Jesus! That is the “stuff” of this hat. That is what it means to be a Royal Rep. It is Jesus shining through your life. May God open our eyes to see how the ordinary things of life are where the image of Jesus shines through us.

A Royal Rep in our Responsibility

There is one more way to wear this hat on Monday and fulfill your call to be a “Royal Rep.” When you step into Monday, you reflect the image of God by doing excellent work. The reason you do your work with excellence is because the original command given at Creation “*to fill the earth and subdue it*” still stands. If you go back to the account of Creation, we are reminded that this is how we represent God in this world and how we bear his image. Therefore, your work matters and we wear this hat when we do our work with excellence. Dorothy Sayers said, “The only Christian work is good work well done.”⁸

She went on to say this, “The Church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays. What the Church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables. . . Let the Church remember this: that every maker and worker is called to serve God in his profession or trade—not outside of it. The Apostles complained rightly when they said it was not meant they should leave the word of God and serve tables; their vocation was to preach the word. But the person whose vocation it is to prepare the meals beautifully

might with equal justice protest: It is not meant for us to leave the service of our tables to preach the word.”⁹ And may we be reminded, the serving of the tables is no less sacred than the preaching of the Word. This is how we operate as good and faithful servants of God and it is how we reflect the image of God to this world. When God finished each day of creation he said, “*it is good.*” So it is when we do our work with excellence. At the end of Monday, we should look at our work and say, “It is good.”

There is a legendary story about Alexander the Great, who came upon one of his soldiers who was dressed sloppily, disheveled, and he reeked of a long night of drinking. He was a pitiful sight. When asked by this great military leader, “Soldier, what is your name?” - he replied, “Alexander, sir.” Alexander looked into the eyes of this soldier who shared his name and said, “Soldier, either change your name or change your behavior.” We carry the name of Jesus with us into our work. When we do our work with excellence, we reflect the image of Jesus wherever we go.

Sometimes it is hard to see, like Elisha’s servant, how your work is making a difference. But if you can learn that by doing your work with excellence, you are honoring God with your work. In doing so, you reflect the image of God by representing him. That is our calling. That is how we take Jesus to work with us.

Conclusion

So as you step into Monday, I invite you to put this hat on and wear it. You carry with you the very image of God. That thought alone ought to transcend the issues that you face tomorrow. You are a Royal Rep. Jesus is transforming us into the image of Christ by one degree at a time. He is using your place of work to do that and he is using your place of work as a place to shine his love with those around you.

Wear the hat well this week. Pray that the image of Jesus shine through your life in the ordinary activities of the day. Be present where you are and be attentive to what God is doing during the day. Do your work with excellence and unto God, knowing that this is how we reflect the image of God in this world. Your work is a high calling. It is an opportunity to shine the love of God to others.

May God open our eyes to see the many ways we represent him and may this thought fill us with joy.

¹Robert Alexander *The Gospel Centered Life at Work* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2014) 50

²Nancy Pearcy *Total Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004) 47

³David Brooks “A Moral Bucket List” *The New York Times* April 12, 2015, Sunday Review, 6

⁴Glenn Sunshine (Every Square Inch Publishing, 2013)

⁵Alexander, 57

⁶Ibid., 59

⁷Tom Nelson *Work Matters* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2011) 93

⁸Dorothy Sayers *Creed or Chaos* (Manchester, NH.: Sophia, 1949)

⁹Ibid

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COMMUNITY GROUPS

Getting To Know Me Questions

1. Get in groups of 3 to 4. Have each person share which one or two of the following emotions they are feeling and why.
 - Sad: What do I feel loss about?
 - Angry: What am I protesting?
 - Scared: What am I threatened by?
 - Happy: What am I smiling about?
 - Excited: What am I joyfully expecting?
 - Tender: Who do I feel love toward?After each person shares, pray for each other. Ask God to give you a word of encouragement for each person in your group and offer that word of encouragement in your prayer. (Please refrain from offering counseling.)
2. Come back as a large group and process what you just did.
 - What was it like to share your feelings?
 - What was it like to hear how others are feeling?

Diving Into The Word

3. Have someone rehearse the story found in 2 Kings 6:8-23.
 - Why do you think Elisha's servant could not see the chariots of Israel at first?
 - What enabled Elisha's servant to see the reality around him?
 - Why was it important that Elisha's servant gain a different perspective on that day?
 - Why is it hard to see God in the normal activity of the day?
 - What helps you see God in the normal activity of the day?
 - How does seeing God in the normal activity of the day help you gain a different perspective?
4. As a "Royal Rep" we bear the image of God wherever we go, including our place of employment. Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 4:6; 16-18. Discuss how these verses help you learn how to reflect the image of God at work?
5. Rehearse the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. How does the Good Samaritan teach us what it means to reflect the image of God in the ordinary things of life? As a group, identify some of the "ordinary" ways we can reflect the image of Christ at work.
6. Read Proverbs 6:6-11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12. What do these verses tell us about how we should work? How does this reflect the image of God?

Taking It Home

7. What is one thing you want to do as a result of this conversation?