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## *Holy Employed By: Pastor Joel*

According to Gallup Poll's 2013 State of the American Workplace survey, American workers are growing more disengaged from their work. Of the approximately 100 million people in America who hold full-time jobs:

- Only 30 % are engaged and inspired at work.
- 50 % are disengaged, or what Gallup described as "kind of present, but not inspired by their work or their managers."
- 20 percent are actively disengaged.
- Only 22 % of U.S. employees are "engaged and thriving."

Disengaged employees are more likely to steal from their companies, negatively influence their coworkers, miss workdays, and drive customers away.

Engaged employees usually drive the innovation, growth, and revenue that their companies desperately need (Gallup, Inc. "State of the American Workplace," 2013).

What would God say to us about our work and attitudes towards our work?

**Continued on Page 2...**

### **SERMON SERIES: HOLY EMPLOYED**

- Nov. 2: Work is More Than a Curse
- Nov. 9: Our Work Matters to God
- Nov. 16: Work & Loving God
- Nov. 23: Who's the Boss?

## **A TOP VIRTUE By: Jay Pound**

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess. 5:16-18)

At the end of 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul wraps up his letter as he usually does, with a final exhortation, greetings to a few individuals, and a benediction. And it is here in the midst of that final exhortation—Paul's Take Home Idea, that we find that sentence above. I would argue in this passage, "give thanks" finds itself amidst lofty company. In fact, the command to give thanks is sandwiched between the command to pray without ceasing and the command not to quench the Spirit. And presumably, Paul has placed gratitude there on purpose.

I point out Paul's arrangement because I think gratitude occupies a vulnerable position in our culture. Gratitude, because it is affirmed by our culture as a virtue, runs the risk of being devalued. Put another way, we as believers, seeing that our culture values gratitude, can be tempted to adopt their assessment of its importance. The problem from a biblical perspective—from Paul's perspective, is that our culture places far too low a value on gratitude.

To our culture at large, gratitude is something polite people do. Gratitude—giving thanks—is nice, but not necessary.

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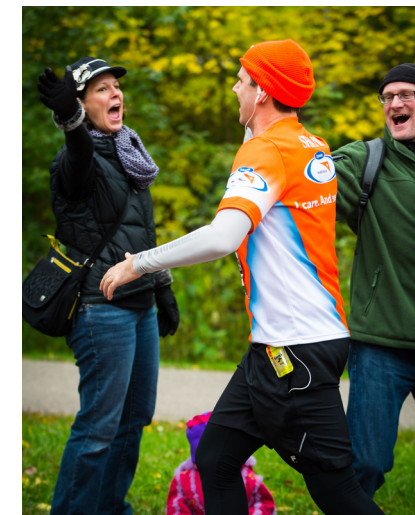
## **CHRIST-CENTERED & CHRIST-SENT MEASURE #6: I AM SERVING OTHERS CHEERFULLY**

Last Spring, as the council and staff began thinking how we might live out our mission—helping individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together. We decided that a great place to practice our sixth measure was at the Twin Cities Marathon. It is one of the biggest events of the year in Minneapolis/St. Paul and we are a block from mile 10.



After Tim Audette talked to the volunteer coordinator of the marathon, we weren't sure if there was room to serve. Water stations for the race are at every odd mile—and these spots were claimed already. Then one day, Tim received

a surprise email, "One of the long standing groups who serve at mile 9 dropped out. Do you want to take their 60 spots?" Tim immediately said "Yes".



During the Twin Cities Marathon, 62 volunteers from First Free served cheerfully at mile 9, handing out water and other refreshments to the runners. Afterwards, the captain of that location said our group was amazing and had more energy than she's seen in a while. She was looking forward to next year and hoped that we would be back.

*First Free's Mission – To help individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together.*

**FIRST FREE:  
OUR MISSION  
IS TO HELP  
INDIVIDUALS  
BECOME  
CHRIST-CENTERED  
& CHRIST-SENT  
TOGETHER**

Want more info?

Visit [www.firstfreechurch.org](http://www.firstfreechurch.org)

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**FIRST FREE STAFF**

**JOEL SUTTON**  
SENIOR PASTOR  
[joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:joel.sutton@firstfreechurch.org)

**JAY POUND**  
ASSOCIATE PASTOR  
[jay.pound@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:jay.pound@firstfreechurch.org)

**BETH BROWN**  
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR  
[beth.brown@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:beth.brown@firstfreechurch.org)

**MIKE GRAFF**  
WORSHIP MINISTRY DIRECTOR  
[mike.graff@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:mike.graff@firstfreechurch.org)

**DEE HUANCA & MAUREEN JUAREZ**  
FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES  
[nurses@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:nurses@firstfreechurch.org)

**KAITLIN GRAFF**  
ADMINISTRATION  
[kaitlin.graff@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:kaitlin.graff@firstfreechurch.org)

**SHELBY ANDERSON**  
DESIGN/COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT  
[shelby.anderson@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:shelby.anderson@firstfreechurch.org)

**SCOTT BECKETT**  
FACILITIES TECHNICIAN  
[scott.beckett@firstfreechurch.org](mailto:scott.beckett@firstfreechurch.org)



SEE MORE INFO AT:  
[www.firstfreechurch.org](http://www.firstfreechurch.org)

**HOLY EMPLOYED** *continued from Page 1...*

In Ephesians 6, Paul instructs Christian slaves, "Obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart."

The slaves Paul was writing to certainly would not have had excellent working conditions. Nor did they have rights before the law. Certainly, they worked hard, long hours for very small paychecks. Yet Paul writes to those slaves and tells them that their work was the will of God for them on that day and they should do it from the heart.

In other words, they were to do their work in a way that honored God. They were to be engaged employees—serving their employer from their heart.

During this month of November, I want to think with you about a Christian view of work in our new sermon series, "Holy Employed." We want to explore questions like these:

- How does my faith and my work relate to one another?
- What does God say about my ordinary Monday through Friday work week?
- Isn't work really just a curse?
- Does my work really matter? Shouldn't I be giving my life to something with eternal significance?

One of the world's best-known paintings is The Angelus by Millet. The word *angelus* means "prayer". It is the picture of two peasants praying in their field. On the horizon is a church steeple, and we presume the church bell is ringing to summon the people to afternoon prayer. To understand the significance of the picture, however, you must study where the rays of the afternoon sun fall: They do not fall on the church steeple; they do not fall directly on the bowed heads of the man and woman; the rays of the sun fall on the wheelbarrow and the common tools at the couple's feet. Millet understood the significance of what Paul wrote to workers. Those peasants in their field not only honored God with their prayers, but also with their ordinary work.

What would change if you were to do your work as though you are serving Christ?

**DID YOU HEAR?**

First Free was given an award by the Hale-Page-Diamond Lake Neighborhood Association for our generous support of the Nokomis Farmer's Market this past summer.

On the fourth Wednesday of June through August, we opened up our north parking lot for the Farmer's Market. And it was a hit in the neighborhood! It was great to see our church facilities benefit the community.

This is part of our vision: shifting from trying to be the best church in the community to actually *being* the best church for the community!

*\*Below is a picture of our award given from the HPDL Neighborhood Association*



**UPCOMING @  
FIRST FREE**

**EXPRESSIONS — NOVEMBER 2ND & 16TH FROM 3:30-5:30 P.M.**  
For those struggling with chronic illnesses or pain, join us from 3:30-5:30 P.M. in room 103.

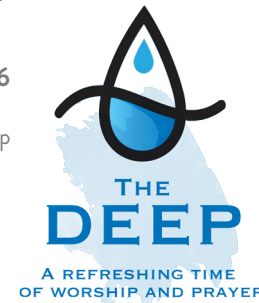
**QUARTERLY CELEBRATION — NOVEMBER 10TH @ 7:00 P.M.**  
Join us as we celebrate what God is doing at First Free! Join us for our Quarterly Celebration on November 10th at 7:00 p.m.

**SOULSHARE — NOVEMBER 15 @ 9:00-10:30 A.M.**  
Men of all ages are welcome to join us for breakfast and fellowship on various Saturday mornings from now until May 2015. Contact Ross Olson with any questions at 612-824-7691. This month's discussion: Intimacy with God.

**THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE — OCTOBER 26-NOVEMBER 16**  
First Free is collecting donations for a local food shelf (CES) October 26 through November 16. Please pick up a bag and list of needed items in the foyer. Let's fill up the foyer with gifts of food/household supplies for others!

**THE DEEP — NOVEMBER 19TH @ 6:30 P.M.**  
Come, be refreshed and encouraged in worship and prayer. Join us for The DEEP on November 19th at 6:30 p.m.

**HARVEST OF PRAISE — NOVEMBER 26 @ 7:00 P.M.**  
You are invited to our annual Thanksgiving service celebrating God's faithfulness! There will be a pie social to follow. Families and couples bring a favorite pie to share. Singles bring a favorite topping to share. Childcare will be provided.



**Donations needed for Operation Christmas Child!**

Collecting until Nov. 12th Creekside Clubs is collecting donations so that our 100 1st-6th grade boys and girls who come on Wednesday nights can each pack at least one shoebox. The children have much fun packing shoeboxes together and they truly feel the joy of giving to others.

We collect a variety of things such as:  
**school supplies:** crayons, colored pencils, small notebooks

**hygiene items:** toothbrushes, toothpaste, washcloths, soap

**small toys:** stuffed animals, cars, dolls  
find more ideas at [samaritan's.purse.org](http://samaritan's.purse.org)

We appreciate every single donation! Thank you!

**Help is Needed for the Packing Party on Wednesday, November 19th!**

If you can help out that evening or in the days beforehand to organize everything, please contact Beth Brown!

*Church Family News*

Our deepest sympathies go out to the family members of Mert Kvelland who passed away on September 29th.

Our deepest sympathies go out to the family members of Harold Engberg who passed away on September 27th.

**CHILD DEDICATION:**  
Nathan Putney  
Henry Beckett  
Eleanor Hurst

**OFFICE CLOSED — NOVEMBER 27TH & 28TH  
DUE TO THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY  
HAPPY THANKSGIVING FROM FIRST FREE!**

**A TOP VIRTUE** *continued from Page 1...*

Depending on your age or point of view, it may seem old fashioned. After all, it isn't like ingratitude starts wars or burns down houses. And so gratitude is relegated to at best a 2nd or 3rd tier virtue, icing on an already good ethical cake.

From our culture's point of view, such an evaluation makes a certain amount of sense, but for a believer it cannot make sense of 1 Thess. 5:16-18. Gratitude is no optional virtue, but the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. And it would be difficult to argue that the shelf with "pray without ceasing," is anything but the top shelf. But this all perhaps raises the question, "Why does Paul place such a high value on gratitude?" Conveniently enough, Paul also provides a powerful answer in Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast." Our salvation, our rescue from sin and death, our very lives are a gift of God! There is nothing we can do to earn it, nothing we can do to repay God, nothing we can do to "call it even" with God. In fact, the most natural, appropriate response just happens to be: gratitude.

As Jesus reminds us elsewhere, gratitude (and love) are the proof that we have understood the magnitude of the gift that we have been given. Gratitude occupies the top tier of virtues for Christians because we are by definition recipients of the greatest gift the world has ever known. If we are ungrateful, it is not simply that we are being impolite, it is that we have failed to grasp the size of the gift we have been given. So with Paul, I, remind us to rejoice, to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks. We above all people have reason to do it.