

Forth In Thy Name, O Lord, I Go*Charles Wesley (1707–1788)*

Forth in Thy Name, O Lord, I go,
 My daily labour to pursue;
 Thee, only Thee, resolved to know
 In all I think, or speak, or do.

The task Thy wisdom hath assigned
 O let me cheerfully fulfill;
 In all my works Thy presence find,
 And prove Thy good and perfect will.

Thee may I set at my right hand,
 Whose eyes mine inmost substance see,
 And labour on at Thy command,
 And offer all my works to Thee.

Give me to bear Thy easy yoke,
 And every moment watch and pray;
 And still to things eternal look,
 And hasten to Thy glorious day:

Fain would I still for Thee employ
 Whate'er Thy bounteous grace hath given,
 And run my course with even joy,
 And closely walk with Thee to Heaven.

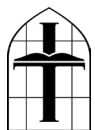
ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***They Matter***Kevin T. Bauder*

Day before yesterday I went to the gas station. I found that it was closing early because there weren't enough employees to keep it open. The day before that I stopped at a favorite fast-casual restaurant, only to discover that their dining room was closed. Again, they lacked employees to stay open. Then I went to the lumber yard and found that 2x4 studs were selling for \$5.00 each—a price I once thought impossible. Apparently, lumber is in short supply right now, mainly because there aren't enough people to log and mill the timber. When I go to the grocery store I learn that some essential items have more than doubled in cost—when I'm lucky enough to find them. Those shortages are due partly to a lack of people to produce and process the items.

Part of me wants to editorialize about flawed governmental policies that pay people to stay home, or errant monetary practices that flood the economy with fiat currency (remember, money is not identical to wealth), or misconceived health mandates that force people out of the work force if they won't submit to unproven, experimental medical procedures. In fact, a *big* part of me *really* wants to editorialize about these things, and a whole bunch more. For instance, the economy is lurching between inflation and recession like a drunk trying to walk down the aisle of an Airbus in a thunderstorm, and we can't blame the *whole* thing on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Or even most of it. Or maybe any of it.

To be sure, the foregoing are big issues. They are worthy of discussion. At some point, biblical truth can and should be brought to bear on them. Right now, however, my mind is occupied with something else.

One of the things that God is teaching our civilization through this period of hardship is a lesson about the importance of little people. By *little people* I mean people who occupy positions that receive little acclamation and compensation, the kind of people whom our society relegates to perceived insignificance. I'm talking about the server who waits your table and the busser who cleans up. I'm talking about the clerk who checks you out at the grocery store and the stocker who fills the shelves. I'm talking about the teenager who flips your hamburger at the fast-food joint and her friend who takes your order. I'm talking about your cab driver (if you ever take a cab),



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your housekeeper (if you ever employ one), and the person who straightens the clothes racks at Walmart (if they ever do get straightened). I'm talking about janitors and garbage collectors and car wash operators.

Within much of our society, these people don't even register. They only get noticed when something goes wrong, at which time they often become targets for somebody's inner Karen. Most of the time they are invisible. They receive minimal compensation and marginal respect. In fact, I have known adults (even Christian adults) who refused to work those kinds of jobs because they thought the work was too menial.

The truth is that those jobs aren't beneath any of us. Furthermore, as we are now learning, they are actually indispensable. Tasks like flipping burgers and operating cash registers are vital for all of us. As we are discovering, we literally can't get along without people to do them. This work is not meaningless at all. Instead, it contributes to human wellbeing and as such it constitutes a genuine calling.

That calling may not be lifelong. Some of those jobs are starting positions where the unskilled gain work experience. They may provide stepping-stones to other callings. But that does not mean that they are to be despised. Rather, they should be celebrated as both useful and dignified.

No one should ever be embarrassed to say, "I clean toilets for a living." Toilets have to be cleaned. Would you want to work or live in a place where they never were? The people who do that job are making the world better for the rest of us. There is honor in what they do.

It seems contradictory, but neither respect nor compensation correlate to the true importance of the work people do. If it did, then farmers would have a hall of fame, while athletes would be fined every time they stepped onto the playing field. Instead, both respect and compensation tend to be calibrated to the difficulty of the job and the scarcity of people who can perform it. The cashier at your Arby's does more to contribute to human flourishing than any professional athlete you can name. If the athlete contributes anything, it is off the field and away from the job.

Why, then, do we witness such a reversal of values? The answer is pretty straightforward. We like to identify with heroes, and an athlete who wins a game for "our" team becomes an obvious hero. We know we could never win the game like that, so we pay the athlete to do it for us, and we pay him well so that we can become champions vicariously. On the other hand, nobody wants to identify with the cashier at Arby's because any of us could do that job. We could go to work for Arby's tomorrow. A job that anybody can do becomes an entry-level position, even if it is vital. In fact, it may not even pay a living wage—and that's not necessarily a bad thing.

An entry-level job, however, is still a calling. It is still dignified. It is still honorable. And, as we are now discovering, it is still necessary. When people stop working those basic but essential jobs, restaurants and shops begin to close. Grocery stores lack necessities or offer them at much steeper prices. Construction slows because materials become scarce, and when anything does get built, its cost is much higher.

The kind of jobs I'm talking about are usually thankless, but we should be grateful for the people who work them. Since we couldn't do without those people, would it hurt us to express our appreciation for them? A word of praise for the person who makes your sandwich or a special word of thanks to the checker at the grocery store will cost us nothing, but expressions of gratitude will help to communicate the importance of the task that those people are performing. In some contexts—as with servers in restaurants—our gratitude should take a more tangible form, and it should be generous. As invisible as these people seem, they are genuinely important. They matter.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
