**Vocation is Ministry**

*Our abilities, whatever they may be, are God-given. Our work, no matter what we do,*

*matters to God. Our jobs, well done, show our love for others.*

**Episode 7: The Joy of Reclaiming Work**

*Babette’s Feast, Chef, Buck, New in Town*

Kings and Queens in the Garden

1. **Representation** In the ancient Near Eastern world, only kings were made in the god’s image vs. Hebrew view of work we are all made in God’s image. All people are the representation of God.
2. **Representative** ANE’n statues showed the king as a small statue next to the larger statue of a god. The Hebraic view of image taught wherever a person is, God’s representative is present.
3. **Royalty** Rulers in the ANE’n world wore crowns signifying their consecration to their gods. The Hebraic view: The type of crown in evidence in Psalm 8 suggests a wreath, woven with flowers, worn at banquets as a sign of royal authority—honored and elevated. God exalts humans in their inward essence; humans bear the weight (“glory”) of God, a show of uniqueness (Ps 8.5).
4. **Realm** In ANE’n polytheism-in a totally material universe-creation becoming “god” is expected. In Genesis jurisdiction of all creation is given from The Creator to the creatures.
5. **Responsibilities** In the ANE, kings were despots, autocrats, enslaving people. Genesis gives humans authority limiting one’s control since humans still must answer to Another.

Kings and Queens with Dirty Robes

Work was originally intended by The Lord for human good (Gen 2:5, 8, 15). The curse of pain and hardship that would accompany labor came as a result of sin (Gen 3:17-19). But work gives meaning to life, providing pleasure as a gift of God (Ecc 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 8:15; etc.).

Without work the result is poverty (Prov 6:6-11). Laziness is condemned in Proverbs only bringing a person to ruin (Prov 18:9). When offered in service to God work is not bondage but a joyful, liberating experience (cf. Deut 28:47). Judging from statements from both Testaments work should be understood as worship—the total response of the total person to our Lord Jesus (Rom 12:2; Eph 6:7). Indeed, the word for work in the First Testament (Deut 6:13) is the same as tilling the soil (Gen 2:5), collective worship (Deut 4:19), or a general statement of life dedicated to serving God (Deut 10:12).

Work honors The One who makes life possible. Work provides for personal needs (2 Thess 3:10-13), families (1 Tim 5:8), and the needy (Eph 4:28). Hard work is seen as positive (Prov 31:10-31) fulfilling the first great commission to rule and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). Right attitudes toward work are to be developed by self-discipline (Gal 5:23), submission (Col 3:22-4:1), and single-mindedness (2 Tim 2:1-7). The whole of the Christian life—labor, work, endurance—is to be subject to and energized by faith, love, and hope (1 Thess 1:3).

Kings and Queens in the City

In the new earth God’s children will “long enjoy the work of their hands” (Is 65:22-23). “The kings of the earth will bring their glory into it…the glory and the honor of the nations” (Rev 21:24-26; Is 60.5, 16).

Five Questions What kind of mindset do I have toward work? Do I have an emotional attachment to work? Is my work a joy? Why am I dissatisfied at work? Does incompletion now force me to consider completion Then? How do I enact the representation of God as His representative at work? How do I use the authority given to me in my realm of authority? How do I apply my responsibilities as a worker?