

My Fellow Workers - Rom. 16:3; Acts 18:1-3, 24-28

Introduction: Labor Day is that one day a year in which we honor the working forces of America, those who have helped to make our country what it is today. But one of the interesting things about it is that on the Sunday before, and even on Labor Day, many of them have to work.

Wouldn't it be great if we were reading the paper and came across this ad which appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle a few years ago: Under "Wanted" it said: "*Executive age 22-80. Job entails sitting with feet on desk from 10 am to 4:30 pm watching others work. Must be willing to play golf every other afternoon. Salary starts at \$1,000 a week.* Then there was this footnote: *We don't really have this job open. We just thought you'd like to see in print what everybody is applying for.*"

This morning, I would like to introduce you to three people who lived many years ago. Two were simple people - tent makers. Today we might refer to them as home builders. They probably didn't earn much. They did not have 40 hour work week. There were no unions and no weekends or holidays off. Yet, they stand out in the scripture as a couple who found time to not only labor as part of the work force, but also, they labored for the Lord. The other is a Teacher. He too labored for the Lord, telling folks about Jesus. Their impact on the Church was felt for years to come. Today, let's look at three of the hero's of the early Church.

1. The Tent-Makers (READ 1-3)

Here we are introduced to Aquila and Priscilla, a couple of tent-makers. Paul met them here probably as a part of the church, but found out that they made a living making tents just as he did. Yet Paul found out that not only did they share in their profession; they also shared in their love for the Lord. Making tents earned them a living, but sharing Jesus and working for the Lord, allowed them to help others to understand more about Jesus.

In Rom. 16:3 Paul calls them "*my fellow-workers.*" Now I don't think he was referring only to their being tent-makers! They were more than tent makers for sure. For one, they were:

A. People Who Shared. Aquila and Priscilla could see their world in need of Jesus. As they sold their tents to people who need a home, they understood that they might not have an eternal home. So, they were the kind of people who shared their Savior as they sold their tents. They believed that Jesus was the only answer to man's needs. They knew man's greatest need was not shelters, but the Savior. As a husband and wife, they dedicated themselves to sharing all they could with whomever about the love of Jesus. Secondly, they were:

B. People Who Dared. Aquila and Priscilla dared to believe that the message of the church must go out. They dared to take in and support Paul, who was making his way throughout the region telling the good news and planting churches. In fact, according to 1 Cor. 16:19, they later had a church which met in their own home. Thirdly, they were:

C. People Who Cared. Aquila and Priscilla were concerned and compassionate people. They could see the big picture. Their caring actions and attitude helped strengthen the ministry of Paul and the church for years to come. They were tent-makers, but they were more than that. Their priority was working for the Lord.

What can we learn from this couple? Well, I hope we can learn that we're not just mill workers, or teachers, or educators. We're not just employees who work for other people.

If you are a Christian, with Jesus firmly in first place in your life, regardless of what kind of position you hold at work, you are first and foremost of "*a fellow-worker*" for the Lord Jesus.

You work to earn a living. Those hours are committed to the company so you can support your family. But even there, you are a laborer and a witness for Jesus in word, actions and attitude.

This Labor Day weekend, somewhere, sometime, perhaps in your prayer time, tell Jesus that you want to be a committed laborer for Him, regardless of the position you hold where you work. You want to make a difference for Him in your workplace. You want your witness to be seen, heard, and felt. You want to be the kind of person He wants you to be, so that your attitude, actions, behavior, and work ethic, speaks clearly to those who are near you. You're more than a tent-maker; you're one of God's fellow workers. Next, let's notice:

2. The Teacher (READ 24- 26)

Perhaps the most outstanding thing this married couple ever accomplished for the Kingdom was helping to share the gospel of Jesus with a teacher named Apollos. By helping this teacher, they did something that would make most of us would refuse to do.

Aquila and Priscilla were just a couple of tent-makers who found time to go to the Synagogue and hear the messages of Jesus. One day they heard a powerful message from Apollos.

Look at what they saw in Apollos:

A. He was an eloquent speaker! (24) Apollos had what seems to be a natural ability to speak publicly and he could share in a way that others were ready and eager to listen. He was an orator and a communicator.

B. He had a knowledge of the Scriptures. (24) Verse 24 says Apollos was "*mighty in the Scriptures.*" You put eloquence and knowledge of the Word together, with a man who can communicate, and you have a teacher who is in demand. He knew his book! He knew the word! He had what it took to be a powerful teacher of God's Word.

C. He spoke with enthusiasm! (25) Apollos was the kind of teacher who could catch and hold the attention of his listeners. He was someone people wanted to hear.

D. He had boldness! (26) Sometimes boldness is confused with the ability to intimidate or manipulate people but it really has more to do with confidence and assurance. With Apollos, this meant he had a message to preach, and the importance of that message had to do with the knowledge that Jesus is the only way to the Father, the only way to heaven, thus, the only way to escape hell. It has to do with the realization that the message must go out because it is the only message worth delivering.

Any congregation would want a teacher like Apollos who had enthusiasm, eloquence, boldness, and a knowledge of the Scriptures. One look at his resume, and the search would be over for many churches.

But, you know if the Church were full of men like Apollos was at this point in his life, then, the Church

would accomplish little of eternal significance.

What are you talking about Steve? This is a great man. Yes he was, but listen to the rest of the story. Apollos "...taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John..."

Was Apollos a great man – yes, without question. Was he a great speaker – yes, without equal. Was he a great leader – yes. He was a mover and a shaker. But Apollos didn't know the whole story. He was only taught up to the baptism of John. He hadn't been taught about the beginning of the Church and the baptism that leads to salvation in Jesus. What were Aquila and Priscilla to do? What would you have done? Let's now look at:

3. The Task

In 1 Cor. 3:6, Paul shares with us how vital the ministry of Apollos became to the Church. *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."* The point here is, there may never have been an Apollos, if there hadn't first been a dedicated Christian couple named Aquila and Priscilla.

Look at what this couple of tent-makers did. It's almost unheard of today. They heard him, and were moved with what they heard. They were able to see immediately his love and enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus.

They also were able to catch that He didn't have the whole picture. They were able to see that he had somehow missed something along the way.

Now they could have decided never to listen to this man again, because he was wrong in his theology; because he didn't have the whole story. They could have left that day and ate him for lunch because he didn't see things their way. They could have ran him down in front of their friends as a charlatan or a liberal. But they didn't. Perhaps they were naive; perhaps they were assuming a lot, but they invited Apollos, an incredible teacher over to their home to do a most amazing thing. They were going to teach him the rest of the story. I really admire their grit.

Apollos became a great a preacher- as far as I know, Aquila never preached a sermon. Apollos was eloquent - Aquila and Priscilla were just tent makers. Apollos could move people – Aquila and Priscilla could move merchandise. Apollos could draw a crowd – Aquila and Priscilla could draw on canvas. Apollos could speak with boldness – Aquila and Priscilla could have been intimidated. Yet, this couple invited him into their home to share with him the way of God more adequately. Their sermon was not spoken from a pulpit and their audience was limited to only one man. But they shared from their heart.

The result of their message was that Apollos, a great teacher, also turned out to be a great learner. He heard the rest of the story about Jesus and the Church, and continued on, a great preacher, with an even greater message. (28)

Now, they could have, but did not say: *"Hey, we're only tent-makers. He probably won't listen anyway We don't know enough. We're not qualified. Who are we to share this with him This is something for someone else to do I think I'll talk to my preacher and have him go and talk to this guy."*

What they did was change the course of eternity for more souls than they could have ever touched on their

own. Men and women who never would have been taught by Aquila and Priscilla were taught by Apollos. Yet, there never would have been a successful Apollos, without those two tent-makers for Jesus. Finally, let's notice:

4. The "Therefore"

Therefore, as a result this account of these 3 folks, I see four qualities that must never be lacking in our lives or our churches. If these are missing, the church is not what it should be. First:

A. We must never lose our sense of eagerness!

Apollos was one eager guy. Eager to preach and teach. Yet, he was eager to learn and listen. I call that balance.

At the same time, so were Aquila and Priscilla. They were eager to hear, which lead them to Apollos, and then eager to help him, which lead them to teach him more adequately. Eagerness is the attitude of readiness. Eagerness is being ready to jump at all opportunities to serve our Lord.

Are we eager people? Are we eager to learn, eager to share, eager to worship, eager to be fellow laborers for the Lord. Are we eager to search out and discover men like Apollos? Are we eager to be used of God?

Secondly:

B. We must never lose our sense of enthusiasm!

These 3 were fervent in Spirit, they had enthusiasm to serve Jesus, to share Him, to know Him. We too need to be enthusiastic for the gospel, for each child and youth who comes our way, for each family who crosses our path, for each project and program of the Church, for each ministry God calls us into, for each position of leadership we undertake.

Apollos certainly had it. It was felt in his preaching. But, even though Aquila and Priscilla as far as we know, didn't preach a sermon to anyone, they were just as fervent in sharing the truth.

I hope we never lose our enthusiasm for Christ and His Church. I hope we never lose our enthusiasm to worship and to make the Church a priority in your life. I hope we never lose the enthusiasm that comes from growing closer and closer to Jesus. If you have lost it, I hope you find it. Thirdly:

C. We must never lose our sense of evangelism!

Aquila and Priscilla never had a pulpit, they built tents. They never held a revival meeting, they built tents. They had no radio program, they built tents. And yet, they lived "*life-style evangelism*" long before it was coined as a phrase.

Evangelism at its most natural level will never be accomplished here in the Church building. In many ways, it cannot be done by the preacher. It has to be done by you. It is you in the pew who are going to make the difference in Sonoraville, Calhoun, Fairmount, Oakman, and Ranger. It's you tent-makers. It's you 40 hour a week employee's. It's the housewives and teenagers and the retired folks - you are the ones who are going to win this county. You are living daily at the most natural level of evangelism. You are the Aquilas and Priscillas of our time.

Apollos was a great and eloquent preacher, but you are really the movers and shakers in our churches. If you don't do the moving and the shaking, it won't get done.

For every Apollos out there preaching the Word in their churches, there are thousands of Aquilas and Priscillas out there who are capable and called to carry the Word into their homes, their schools, their marketplaces, and their workplaces. We must never lose our sense of evangelism. Finally:

D. We must never lose our sense of the eternal.

Aquila and Priscilla knew that tents would eventually have to be replaced. Regardless of the quality of the tent, it would not last.

Likewise, they knew they lived in a temporary world where nothing would last forever. They made tents to support their real mission of leading people to Jesus, so they could live forever.

Behind the boldness and the eloquence of the preacher Apollos, was the urgency of the eternal. He knew every message he preached would lead to a decision. Some would come to Jesus, and some would turn away. We must continue to see people as eternal people, either in Jesus or not in Jesus.

We are here, placed by God, to be another Aquila, Priscilla, or Apollos. To preach, to share, to invite folks to know Jesus.

What a team they made. And what a team we can be. I hope you are an active part of the team. I pray that you are prepared to join hands with Aquila and Priscilla and Apollos to become people with eagerness, enthusiasm, evangelism, and an understanding of the eternal.

We are all laborers. But we're not just laborers who work to make a living. We're laborers for the Lord of the harvest. We are fellow workers together. Each of us should pull our share of the duty, and pull together making a difference in the lives of people.