September 5

Happy Monday, everyone.

Today we celebrate the holiday called Labor Day, which commemorates the contribution workers have made to the prosperity and well-being of our nation. Traditionally, it is a day when we rest from our labors, gather with family and friends, and enjoy the remaining summer weather, perhaps with a cookout. In our house, I’ll be grilling brats and sautéing peppers and onions to go with them. Judy will be making her very tasty cole slaw.

Despite the fact that on this day we celebrate labor, we nonetheless tend to think of “work” or “labor” in negative terms. It’s something we have to do in order to make a living. It can be tedious or boring at times, and at other times can be arduous or difficult. We often can’t wait for a holiday, a day off, or a vacation in order to take a break from our labors. And then that day comes when we retire from our work and no longer have to commit to daily labor.

However, as Christians, our labor for the Lord takes on a different perspective. As we saw in last week’s sermon message, “Serving the Lord is not work, it’s worship.” The apostle Paul said it like this in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica:

“We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2-3).

So on this Labor Day, by all means, kick back, enjoy the late summer weather, and eat some delicious food with family and friends. But also remember that working on behalf of the Lord should neither be a burden nor tedious, but should be the product of faith... and a labor of love.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
**September 6**

Grace and peace to you this day.

As I have written before, I have a bird feeder that hangs right outside my office window at home. I made it from some scrap lumber three years ago and the weather has not been kind to it. I’ve had to use some old scrap pieces to repair it, especially when the rope from which it is suspended broke and it fell to the ground. Now it looks like a building code violation. Here’s a picture.

Nonetheless, I have noticed lately that when I work in my office and the weather is nice, the birds (and that pesky squirrel) like to come by for a snack and then leave. They eat their fill and then depart. However, I have noticed that when the weather is rainy or windy, the birds hang out. Because it is in a sheltered area, the birds take refuge from the elements. Sometimes they stay in the bush to the right and behind it, other times they actually sit on the feeder. Here’s another picture of what I’m talking about. It was raining that day, and when I went into my office the birds flew from the feeder and into the bush:
I feel as if the feeder and the sheltered area is something like church to the birds. Not perfect, perhaps a bit rough around the edges, but always there for a meal, fellowship, and shelter from the world. A place where all are welcome.

In his final days, this is how Moses describes the importance of gathering as the people of God to his friend and successor Joshua:

“Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess” (Deuteronomy 31:12-13).

It has never been God’s desire that our church be perfect, that our buildings be new and glistening and filled with the latest technology. It is simply that we gather. Men, women, little ones, and the immigrants and travelers among us, to hear the word of God and to worship Him with reverence and awe.

My prayer for you today and always is that when you wake up on Sunday morning, you thank the Lord for the Sabbath, and then honor the day with joy, gladness, and thanksgiving.

Looking forward to seeing you all on Sunday.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
Greetings to you DGCC Family.

The park where I walk my big dog early in the morning recently put up this sign:

He and I have encountered a coyote twice. Once in our old neighborhood and once in a park near here. It was close, and it was frightening. In both instances, the coyote seemed to come suddenly out of nowhere. Both the coyote and the big dog bared their teeth, raised the hair on their backs, and uttered a low and menacing growl. In both instances, the coyote chose to go on its way. Probably not out of fear of my very domesticated and somewhat spoiled (OK, very spoiled) dog, but likely because it didn’t want to take on both of us.

Both times, my guess is that the coyote felt that its territory was being threatened. I am reminded that that is how the force of evil in the world, our spiritual enemy, operates. This is how the disciple Peter describes it:

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

In modern times, that roaring lion produces things like addiction, spiritual empathy, declining churches, discouragement, a divided nation, divided families, and the misbegotten belief that God doesn’t care. In fact, God cares deeply. So deeply that He
chose to sacrifice His Son so that we need not fear that roaring lion, but instead can count on the protection of the Most High. This is how the apostle Paul describes it:

“But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

So today, be vigilant, but also take comfort that the Creator of the universe guards you against that roaring lion and looks forward to the day when you rest in His protecting arms for eternity.

IHS,

Pastor Lou

September 8

Shalom to you this day.

OK, last devotional about birds and my bird feeder. I promise.

There is a male cardinal that comes by often when I am in my office, and he almost always repeats the same pattern of behavior. First, he sits in the bush to the left and behind the feeder:
Then, when he thinks it’s safe, he gets a bite to eat:

Maybe it's me, but he always seems to be looking right at me. I think he might be reminding me, as a Cubs fan, that the Cardinals are in first place and the Cubs...well, are not. Because he’s a regular visitor, and we’ve gotten to know each other a bit, I’ve decided to name him. So, say hello to Yadier. Yaddy for short. (If you’re not a baseball fan, ask someone who is to explain it to you.)

In any case, Yaddy’s visits are always welcome because I marvel at how his vivid red color stands out against the summer green backdrop. The psalmist said it like this:

“How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (104:24).

God delivers the beauty of His creation right to my office window every day. In doing so, He reminds me in this way that the earth, and everything in it, is His. And that includes you...and me.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
September 9

Happy Friday, everyone. Here's your musical devotional for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMAM2lbuUxQU

IHS,

Pastor Lou