***1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.***

Any of us that were blessed to grow up in and around working families will agree that some if not most of our very best memories involve working in some way. I remember sitting with my sisters and shucking corn, stringing beans. Canning peaches and tomatoes with my mother. Gathering firewood with my father. We may have been working, laboring, but we were also loving. The labor was obvious, but the loving, hidden in that moment, is what I see the strongest as I grow older.

Labor Day is a day recognizing those that labor. The government thought it a good idea to set aside a holiday. But God is the creator of labor. Genesis 2:15 *Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.* God blessed us with the capability to work. Some may argue, saying ease and comfort is so much better than work, but the man or woman paralyzed, sick, unable to work, would strongly disagree. Many time I have spoken to those forced to retire after a health event and what I hear is that they miss the ability to get up, work, simply go.

*1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* Today we start a new year of service in the church. People have been nominated for various committees, jobs, labor for the church and for God. Make no mistake that, when we accept a position of service in the church, we have accepted a position of service to and for God. Our labor over the next year will not be in vain. Hebrews 11:6 says *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* Before we teach Sunday school, prepare a Communion table, plan an Activity, or sit in a Deacon’s meeting, we must be diligently seeking God. Our heart must be set, immovable, steadfast, seeking the God we seek to serve.

I think it very appropriate that we start our new year of service, labor for God in this church we call home, the Sunday before Labor Day. Let it remind us that nothing in this church happens through magic or accident. Someone labored for the Lord, knowing that their labor is not in vain, believing that He is a rewarder of work done for Him. Colossians 3:23-24 *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance;****for you serve the Lord Christ***. This applies outside the church, in all we do, wherever we do it. This applies inside the church as well, laboring heartily as unto the Lord, knowing that it is He that will reward. 1 Corinthians 10:31 tells us - *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* When our heart is God focused, picking up sticks on the playground will glorify Him. When we are self focused, preaching the greatest sermon in the largest cathedral to the largest crowd ever is nothing more than a sounding brass, a clanging gong.

Proverbs 14:23 says - *In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty.* Proverbs 16:3 *Commit your works to the Lord, And your thoughts will be established.* When we do things with our heart directed to God, nothing is wasted. All labor is profitable to the Kingdom when we are Kingdom focused. When we commit our energy to God’s glory, our thoughts will be directed properly. He will lead, but we must follow. Ecclesiastes 9:10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.* The time to do our work for Almighty God is while we have the ability to work for Almighty God. Whatever we find to do, be it on a committee, in a job, on our own, or outside these four walls, we must do it with our best efforts. God recognizes and rewards.

In John 6:27, Jesus tells us - *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”* As we enter this new year of service to God through this church, may we never labor for that which perishes – the praise and recognition of man, but may we labor for the everlasting, that which will endure for our eternity. May we serve God with Joy by serving our brothers and sisters in Christ, within and without these walls, and by letting our light shine to those that may not yet know Jesus. May our labor and life be a sermon to all that see. May we remember, our labor for Him is never in vain. God sees, God rewards, and God remembers for all our eternity.