

REFLECTIONS

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**For what profit is it to a man if he gains
the whole world, and loses his own soul?**

Matthew 16: 26 NKJV

Provision or Purpose

In his book, *Leadership Is An Art*¹, Max DePree recalls the story of the death of the millwright in his father's factory. Now the millwright was a valued individual who also served the business in a key position. So, Mr. DePree went to visit the family to pay his respects to them and to honor his long-time employee and friend. During the visit, the widow of the millwright began to read poetry to those present. She read one beautiful poem after another. Mr. DePree was so struck by the magnificence of the poems that he asked the widow who the poet was. "My husband," she answered.

As the story goes, there has been a question around the factory since that time. Was the worker a millwright who wrote poetry, or a poet who worked as a millwright?

We may never know the answer this man would have given, but we can discover the answer to a similar question in our own lives. Is the provision of our work the treasure we seek, or is our work the provision for a greater purpose?

Apostle Paul answered that question for himself when he described that he is a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. (*Romans 15:16*) Yet his trade was tent making.

While his purpose in life was clear to Paul, most of us live our lives with less clarity. Our work consumes so much of our daily lives that we confuse the provisions we need from it with the ends we seek to serve. In our quest to sustain ourselves, or beyond that, to gain wealth, pleasure, power, and fame, we forget that these are provisions from our labor, but not the fruit of our lives.

A few of us are blessed to engage in work that serves as both a provision and a purpose; but far more of us use our work for provision to reach another end. The millwright may have made a difference in the world by how he made a living. But his work served as the provision to use his God given talent to paint a poetic picture of God's beautiful world.

Provision or purpose, the pursuit of the first can blind us to the second. Provision comes as a gift from God. The fruit of our lives comes as we use those gifts to the glory of God's kingdom.

"You are the light of the world."

Richard +

¹ Max DePree, *Leadership Is An Art* (New York, a Currency book, Doubleday Publishing, 2004)

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