

*Almighty God, you have so linked our lives one with another that all we do affects, for good or ill, all other lives: So guide us in the work we do, that we may do it not for self alone, but for the common good; and, as we seek a proper return for our own labor, make us mindful of the rightful aspirations of other workers, and arouse our concern for those who are out of work; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. BCP 261*

Labor Day in the United States began in 1894 when the first Monday of September was signed into law as a national holiday. The story grows through years of industrial revolution, advocacy, tragedy, and violence, but most of all a desire to acknowledge a work force that that was not recognized and valued. In 1882,



10,000-20,000 laborers from different trades marched in New York city, bringing attention to long hours, 7-day work weeks, and unsafe working conditions. In the midst of many strikes, violence and complicated struggles between companies, laborers and government, a day was set aside to recognize and celebrate the work of laborers—our Labor Day.

The Garden of Eden, Thomas Kinkade pub 2019

Now, in parts of the country, Labor Day is associated with a long weekend at the end of summer, barbeques, parades. So, we might ask, with some laws in place to protect workers and children, and a day off for many, what does

Labor Day have to do with our faith tradition? Labor Day, for people of faith, has to do with how we understand “work.”

In the book of Genesis there are two stories of creation, Chapters 1-3 and our understanding of God creating us in God’s own image to be caretakers of the Garden of Eden, and even companions to God is in the first story. On the seventh day, God rested and delighted in all that is “very good.” Keeping the Sabbath holy, the fourth commandment points toward the Judaic Christian tradition of not working on the seventh day, and this includes the strangers and servants in our midst. The day of rest points toward the delight of God in all creation and honoring God by not laboring on that day. The second story of creation describes Adam and Eve leaving the Garden, the difficulty of tilling the ground, working hard for daily bread and pain of bringing life into the world. Christ came to restore us that we might live in the “new creation where we are once again in relationship to God, deeply connected to all in the Garden and to one another. This is, of course, simplified; the study of creation and thousands of years of theology has no one pattern, but, it recognizes a “rest” that is holy and setting aside time to delight in all creation.

As co-creators we play with color, plants, flowers, architecture, clay, rocks, gems, music, metal, wood, fiber, light, and more. To forget that all is part of God’s own creation is to be stuck in the worry of work and not depend on every breath on God.

Perhaps, this Labor Day we can think – “bonus Sabbath Day,” pointing toward justice, equity, and delight.