



Jeff Haanen: [\(00:03\)](#)

Conversations about labor oftentimes go directly to policy, but actually I think they first need to go to the cultural importance of work and especially lower wage work, and this is a place where I think the church really needs to lean in.

Joanna Meyer: [\(00:19\)](#)

You're listening to the Faith & Work Podcast, where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor and society through our daily work.

Joanna Meyer: [\(00:30\)](#)

Hi, and welcome to the Faith & Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institute's Director of Public Engagement, and I'm joined today by Jeff Haanen, the institute's founder and CEO. Hi Jeff.

Jeff Haanen: [\(00:41\)](#)

Hey, Joanna, how are you?

Joanna Meyer: [\(00:42\)](#)

Really good. Jeff, what's been one highlight of your summer so far?

Jeff Haanen: [\(00:47\)](#)

Well, I have to say the Wizard of Oz. Last summer my four daughters put on a production of Beauty and the Beast in our backyard. It was a pandemic, so what else do you do? And this year my oldest, who's now 12 years old, decided to continue the tradition, so they just finished the Wizard of Oz. It was not a small show, 25 cast members, all buddies from the neighborhood, 60 parents, neighbors, full costumes for the characters. We had The Tin Man, Ozzie and Dorothy, and even the Wicked Witch and the Smoke Machine. So I sold the concessions in our backyard under a tent next to our pumpkin garden, so I worked in retail even if just for a couple of hours. Had a good time.

Joanna Meyer: [\(01:20\)](#)

That's awesome. I saw video of the event and it was an amazing production. As we introduce today's topic, I'm wondering if you, our listeners have experienced something I've observed here in the Denver Metro area this summer. The wait time at local restaurants is so long. The other day I was in line at a bagel shop and I was getting impatient because it was taking forever to be served and then I had time, of course. Because I was waiting I started looking around and realized that the store had half of the staff than it normally had before the pandemic.

Joanna Meyer: [\(01:50\)](#)

And that's not the only occasion that this has happened, there's been a shortage of people working service industry jobs these days. I even heard anecdotally that local hardware stores have run out of now hiring signs because so many employers are trying to up their staff. This month the US Labor Department reported that the number of available jobs rose to 9.3 million,



which is almost matching the number of people that are looking for work, a level that we haven't seen since the year 2000. Jeff, I'm wondering if you have noticed this and what you think is going on here?

Jeff Haanen: [\(02:20\)](#)

Well, yeah, it's a good question. It is a really strange time for labor markets, for sure. Let me actually share a couple of thoughts. First, the topic has been polarized, like politically polarized pretty quickly. On one side of the political spectrum it said that people aren't really going back to work because of high federal unemployment benefits, that's the motivation to work has diminished. On the other side, people will say that it's the liberation and empowerment of the individual who is not able to command a higher salary for what was lower wage work. And then they say, "Businesses do you want more employees? Okay, sounds good, here's the plan, pay them more." Wages have been too low for too long, right? So somewhere in the middle, other economists say what happened after the pandemic was this great dislocation. Millions of people moved and now there's a great mismatch between workers and where the jobs are.

Jeff Haanen: [\(03:06\)](#)

What do I say? Well, let me back up here and kind of paint even a broader picture. I think there are big macro trends that are impacting this as well, and the real near impossibility of hiring people back after the pandemic. One is an aging workforce. Millions of people are leaving in the workforce and the pandemic hastened that trend, so people are exiting the workforce, particularly in skilled trades. There's a lack of comprehensive immigration reform and the supply of what historically has been lower wage workers, that has really cut down the number of workers that the US needs. There's also declining birth rates, we saw from the 2020 census. So there's less actually people in the workforce, actually we're growing less quickly than we have in the past.

Jeff Haanen: [\(03:49\)](#)

As well as in the last 50 years, one author, his name is Nicholas Eberstadt has said that men, particularly working age blue collar men have been dropping out of the workforce as well. So there are macro factors and I think honestly, both the right and the left have some amount of truth to why there's such an odd mismatch right now between the work available and the workers to fill those jobs.

Joanna Meyer: [\(04:10\)](#)

Mm (neutral). It's a privilege to discuss this topic with Jeff today because he's the resident expert on low wage work. In fact, he's working on a two book contract with University Press exploring faith in labor, and we'll be exploring this even more on August 19th at Denver Institute's hosting a lunchtime event, Loving Your City's Laborers, so we're thrilled to explore this more. Jeff, tell me a little bit more about why this topic has become a passion project for you.

Jeff Haanen: [\(04:34\)](#)



Yeah, good question. Let me tell you a story, it's actually about a local pastor. His name is Josue Mambo de Leon. We just call him Mambo here in town. He's a pastor of a bilingual working class congregation called Westside Church Internacional, a little bit of Spanglish there. And he has been very converse in sort of the Faith and Work world, and so he attended a Faith & Work conference and I asked him, "What was your perception of this?" And he said, "Boy, it was strange. For us, work is not about thriving it's about surviving." And so when I was talking to him, it became clear that Mambo was not just from a different ethnic world, he was also in a different cultural world in terms of a view toward work. And Mambo said, "Hey, you know you guys oftentimes start with the premise that you have a job and you feel like this lack of purpose, but it doesn't resonate with us. How are you supposed to find purpose and flourish when you don't even have opportunities?"

Jeff Haanen: [\(05:27\)](#)

And so that story that Mambo told kind of was emblematic of what's really going on, the Faith & Work Movement has exploded hundreds of new conferences, books, organizations, but there's a growing anxiety among Christian leaders that our national vocation conversation has a class problem. And it really goes back a long time. I mean like a century ago, partnerships between clergy and labor unions, they flourished, but when the forces of industrialization transformed the trades in the 19th century, vocational ed liberal arts schools, they kind of parted ways, a new mantra for college education took root. It was about do what you love. Steve Jobs said this in a 2005 Stanford commencement speech, I'll quote him here, he says, "You got to find what you love. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work, and the only way to do great work is to love what you do."

Jeff Haanen: [\(06:17\)](#)

So work done out of necessity was devalued and eventually conversations about Christianity and work applied the word vocation almost exclusively to college kids contemplating work they would most enjoy. So a lot of the Faith & Work conversation has been very absent from two-thirds of workers, which is the working class or those that don't have a college degree in America. So this conversation has been a real puzzlement for me thinking what is happening to the other two thirds of workers in the United States that oftentimes, I don't know, and I'm not talking to.

Joanna Meyer: [\(06:47\)](#)

Yeah, I saw this firsthand. This weekend I was hanging out with my friend Kelly Zellman and her daughters who both have graduated from high school. One is a Boettcher scholar, which if you're from Colorado you know that that's a full ride scholarship to any university in the state. It's for some of our top students. And the other daughter just didn't love to read. You couldn't find two teens who are more different than each other. And she said, "I always struggle at school because I do not learn by reading." And so for her she goes, "We need to change the narrative so that going to colleges isn't the only requirement for what we think of as a successful future." So she's at cosmetology school and loving it.



Joanna Meyer: [\(07:18\)](#)

I saw pictures of every new style of highlight she had put on people's hairs. She was learning her trade, and I think she's going to be an amazing hairdresser and have an incredible service to people, but it took a lot of conversation around their household to figure out how to navigate these two very, very different kids and honoring work that often in comparison to the highly educated college route just looks different.

Jeff Haanen: [\(07:40\)](#)

Yeah, what is success and what is not? And how do we define that? And why do we define it that way? It's something we have to really think about when we're thinking about the pathway for our kids, even our own pathway in the work world.

Joanna Meyer: [\(07:50\)](#)

Yes, so funny hearing the older daughter, the one that's the Boettcher scholar say, "We need to change the narrative, so college isn't the only path for high school graduates." So at least in their family, that conversation is happening. So as we start our discussion, let's take a brief look at the current US labor market and then we'll take a step back and we'll look at some of the historical and cultural factors that have shaped the way the faith community thinks about low wage work. And then our conversation will conclude with insight on how to better love and serve our neighbors working in these roles. So Jeff, it's common to think of the types of jobs that fall into the category of labor as work in heavy industries. I think of things like manufacturing, construction, or trucking, but that perception really is no longer true. What do you mean when you refer to labor?

Jeff Haanen: [\(08:34\)](#)

Yeah, that's a great question, Joanna. So when I use the term labor, I'm not just thinking about a laborer on a construction site, like you said that's what we think about. I'm actually thinking about two things, one is people whose jobs are not primarily in front of a screen and people with lower income jobs. So if you take for instance, the most common jobs in America, this is who I'm thinking of when I think of labor: food service, cashier, retail, direct care providers, cleaning a hotel or office buildings, this is by far and away the largest category of jobs. So in my work doing research on working class, it's really focused on anybody without a four year college degree, which is two thirds of the United States, so that's either a high school or some college. Many of these jobs are well-paid. Actually on the whole, those with less than a four year degree, either just high school or two year degree, they do make less than those with a four year degree.

Jeff Haanen: [\(09:23\)](#)

So labor has often been associated with the blue collar jobs, that is historically jobs held by men that would work with their hands and had to wear a blue collar to hide the dirt from their work, that's why we call them blue collar.

Joanna Meyer: [\(09:35\)](#)

I did not know that.



Jeff Haanen: [\(09:36\)](#)

Uh-huh (affirmative). But today there are also forms of labor that are pink collar and white collar. So pink collar jobs traditionally held by women, and white collar is usually like an office context but oftentimes this is also lower wage work, like an administrative assistant, for example. So what's interesting here on this question is in early days at Denver Institute we used to think about work and organize in terms of industries. So we'd say things like, "Let's do an event for doctors, lawyers, business peoples and engineers." We never really realized that these categories were actually only for the professions. We almost completely overlooked the majority of jobs and majority of workers, and so our bias has really been, at Denver Institute, I would say thinking about work as a professional was steep, so we've really had to grow and to think what is the life of a laborer or a lower income worker like.

Joanna Meyer: [\(10:24\)](#)

Yeah, I was just talking to a friend and he goes, "Hey, I want to come to the labor event, but I'm like laboring. I'm on the job site and I can't come in the middle of the day." Because that's when we're hosting the event. A little different conversation about who's coming, I think we're focusing the event for our business leaders, but he made a good point is that you do have to just change your thinking to fully understand the uniquenesses of these diverse roles in our community.

Jeff Haanen: [\(10:43\)](#)

Yeah, totally. Yeah, if you're in an office job, you usually have a lot of flexibility around your day. If you're punching in and punching out and you're working early, not so much. Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: [\(10:52\)](#)

Yeah, you don't have freedom of your schedule. Jeff you've interviewed many workers for the book, what's the daily reality for people working these jobs?

Jeff Haanen: [\(11:00\)](#)

Yeah, well, I'm hesitant here to make too many generalizations. The temptation is, you know from my professional kind of nerdy perch is to look at lower wage jobs and talk about how terrible they are, how unfair or low paying. That is true for many jobs, but let me first say something important, the number one thing that I believe professionals have missed is recognizing dignity and the importance of working class jobs. Let me tell you another story here if I could. When I was growing up, the best TV shows all featured lovable laborers. So Cheers, The Simpsons, Love and Marriage, The Wonder Years, each of them centered around the lives of liberal laborers. Think about Cliff from Cheers, he was a postman, Homer Simpson pulled levers at the nuclear power plant, and Al Bundy, then I remember Al Bundy, he sold women's shoes.

Jeff Haanen: [\(11:46\)](#)

One episode of The Wonder Years featured Kevin learning about his dad's career path from a loading dock worker to a distribution manager. And Mr. Arnold told his son, "You have to make



choices, son. We have to try to be happy with them. I've done pretty well, don't you think?" And I think what's so interesting is what a difference a couple of decades make. Since '92, almost every Emmy Award for outstanding comedy has gone to white collar adults living in Los Angeles, Seattle, Boston, New York, or Washington and usually they don't have kids. The exception would be *The Office*, but its humor is oftentimes based right on the idea that selling paper is an utterly miserable job that we have to basically joke about in order to survive, right? So oftentimes it's sometimes blue collar characters are portrayed like in the TV show *This Is Us*, it's the story of a construction worker, but it's flashed back to the '70s and '80s as if the only blue collar jobs are the manual labor jobs that existed three decades ago, right?

Joanna Meyer: ([12:41](#))
Whoa.

Jeff Haanen: ([12:42](#))
This is not true. So I'm just saying that conversations about labor oftentimes go directly to policy, but actually I think they first need to go to the cultural importance of work and especially lower wage work and this is a place where I think the church really needs to lean in. There's one guy, his name is Oren Cass.

Jeff Haanen: ([13:00](#))
He wrote a book and here's what he says in his book, he says, "Waiters, truck drivers, retail clerks, plumbers, secretaries, and others, they all spend their days helping the people around them and fulfilling roles crucial to the community. They do hard unglamorous work for a limited pay to support themselves and their families." So he asks, "Why shouldn't we admire those who do harder jobs for lower wages on a broad scale? We're capable of doing this with police officers and teachers and firefighters, why can't the work done by trash collectors, housekeepers and janitors be inherently deserving of respect and something that we look up to as a society?" I think the daily reality of a lot of working class men and women is defending their dignity in a culture that doesn't recognize the value and the importance and the public contribution of their work, so that's how I want to start this conversation.

Joanna Meyer: ([13:45](#))
So I think it's helpful even to reflect on your own family history because I think of my great-grandparents and even grandparents, and many of them were working in manual labor. They were working on the railroad, they were boiler makers, and farmers and they were not doing highly educated work. My grandparents were the first people that went to college and that's only two of my grandparents. My other ones were farmers their whole life, and my guess is most of our listeners, maybe even your own family, Jeff, were very much working in the trades or in labor in their early years.

Jeff Haanen: ([14:13](#))
Yeah. Yeah, and still today as well, but I think the narrative oftentimes is even... This is a very typical narrative in a lower wage work, for their kids they don't want them to be in those



industries, they want them to go to college and have a professional career because oftentimes the work is either lower paying or difficult, but that actually can lead to a big bifurcation to those that don't make that switch to the kind of air conditioned world of an office, right? There's very much a two track world that you see in the education system, but also happens in the work world, and oftentimes we've done ruins to live in one of those tracks, the professional track too, and oftentimes then we're not understanding and really deeply engaging and actually just listening and understanding about the working lives of millions and millions of people in the United States.

Joanna Meyer: [\(14:59\)](#)

Yeah. Jeff, what do you think are some of the barriers that keep low wage workers from thriving?

Jeff Haanen: [\(15:05\)](#)

Yeah. Well, let me first say first and foremost, I actually think it's first about respect. And then I did talk about that a little bit already, but if you see people look down upon you for your job, it has a way of seeping into your identity. And because every single person of us, they want to believe that what we're doing is valuable, we want to spend our lives in a valuable way, oftentimes this attitude is that disrespect is met with anger and resentment and even a growing class divide in the US, so actually I think this is our first barrier. It's not like a hard tangible thing, but it is real in our culture, it's respect. Let me also just point out the obvious, you know on this podcast we're talking about low wage jobs. If you have a low wage job, it's really hard to afford life in America. It's very difficult, and it causes really all sorts of stress.

Jeff Haanen: [\(15:51\)](#)

One scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, he put together what he calls the Graph of the Century. And what it does is it tracks relative cost of living in the United States since 2000. It's become really insanely expensive in the last 20 years since 2000. Education, healthcare and housing, these are all things that working class men and women in hourly jobs, they really struggle to afford even particularly housing since the pandemic. What's become really cheap is things like TVs, video subscription services, software, even relatively speaking, cars have become cheaper compared to inflation. So yeah, many can afford the necessities, but the low wage high cost world, the sort of feeling of being stuck is a reality for many millions of people.

Jeff Haanen: [\(16:35\)](#)

And the third, another kind of barrier, let me just mention this one last thing, it's social capital. Social capital, that's just fancy language for how many relationships you have. As it turns out, if you have lots of good relationships, the odds of you being in poverty are really low. If you have few relationships and if they're broken, the odds are much higher. So oftentimes, lower wage workers, they stay in lower wage jobs either because they don't have the qualification to get a different job, but it's also because of they may not know of anybody that is working at a better job and can't get a connection for that advancement.



Jeff Haanen: ([17:07](#))

So let's be honest, I would like to say that all jobs got through a meritocracy where everybody's earning kind of their just due, but you really have to know the right people. I've hired quite a few people and lot of it is social relationships. So you could put your resume on Indeed for like a decade and still be earning what you're earning today if you're in a low wage job and never sort of move forward. So really access to relationships, especially to people with more power influence is a real barrier to thriving and advancement.

Jeff Haanen: ([17:42](#))

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Jeff Haanen: ([18:12](#))

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Joanna Meyer: ([18:49](#))

Yeah, Jeff, I'm curious because I think how we think about all forms of work comes from a theological or a historical context. What are some of the concepts or the movements that have shaped the way that we think about labor?

Jeff Haanen: ([19:01](#))

Yeah, good question. Let me briefly talk about history, especially in the last 5,000 years. Catholics traditionally aligned and advocated for labor unions, and this followed way back to the beginning of Catholic social thought, Pope Leo XIII wrote an encyclical called *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. And in that, it advocates for the rights of workers and that sort of continued through the post-World War II era, but politics, especially in America, American Catholics like evangelical tended to align more with conservative politics and the labor over time became more of a left wing issue, and so this is a huge summary. I'm missing all sorts of important points here, right? But this is one reason why most American Christians have really never thought about advocating for low wage workers as a part of their Christian faith. So the issues around individual, Liberty and sexuality, those have been at the forefront of how we think about politics, but issues love justice, low wage work, have struggled to find a long-term home in the church that doesn't get immediately polarized or politicized in our context.

Jeff Haanen: ([20:04](#))

And then theologically, let me make just a couple of comments here as well. Now, everyday work, what we consider working class jobs, they're everywhere in the Bible. They're everywhere. So in the New Testament, obviously Jesus himself, he was a carpenter. Tent makers, fishermen, this is the majority of jobs. The Old Testament, the same way from shepherds to farmers. So minimally, we should take seriously, the lived realities of the great saints we admire in the Bible and what their life was like, and a lot of it was working class jobs. But let me make one other contemporary point, today, especially in the world in which we live or what I call the Faith & Work Movement, we tend to emphasize theologically Genesis 1 and 2, that's God's call to cultivate the earth as an aspect of creativity in our world.

Jeff Haanen: ([20:50](#))

Again, remember this story I told earlier about Mambo, this is not how most working class people see their jobs. And if you're scanning barcodes at Walmart, you are not thinking about your creative calling.

Joanna Meyer: ([20:59](#))

Totally.

Jeff Haanen: ([20:59](#))

Okay, this is just not what your life of work is like. I wrote an article on this topic called God of the Second Shift for Christian Today a while back that we talked about earlier, it's going to be a book. And I talk about it in that professional communities we really need to emphasize the fall with the powerful and creation, the goodness of a work with the vulnerable. So oftentimes for professionals, we're seeing Genesis 1:2 and this is an opportunity to create and make my dent on the world, that's how we see theology and work. Oftentimes professionals need to see Genesis 3, there are broken systems, there is injustice, and we're implicated in those. And conversely, those that are very aware of the brokenness of the world, and that may be on the underside of a lot of these injustices or low wage or difficult contexts, we need to emphasize that God has made you into a creator and there are skills and talents you have that the world needs.

Joanna Meyer: ([21:53](#))

Yeah, it's humbling when you realize that we've limited the vision of what creative living and creativity is both in our understanding the scope of what it is, and also we've limited to a certain kind of people. Somehow that certain type of work or people that educated are deserving of a job that allows them to exercise their brain or have some autonomy or freedom to shape their work. And I think how might life for any worker change if their employers and their managers saw them as people with creative potential?

Jeff Haanen: ([22:23](#))

Absolutely. Well, it transforms even how you think about everything from manufacturing and direct care. You'd actually asking more frontline workers, how should we change this? How can



we get better? What are your creative ideas for actually pushing this forward rather than thinking that's just a low wage job that's going to be relatively speaking, pulling the lever? We have to really take seriously God's creative capacity that is put in all people and be listening well.

Joanna Meyer: ([22:46](#))

Yeah, focus more almost on control. I think of someone like a Walmart checker and I think the goal is probably a systematized way of moving customers through, not getting out of line, not breaking the rules and I think, "Boy, that just flies in the face of human dignity, I know God created us to be, so there's a real call to rethinking how we lead people in low wage jobs." So let's get practical, what can managers and leaders do to love their neighbors and their companies who might be facing some economic or social or family challenges in this season?

Jeff Haanen: ([23:16](#))

Yeah. That's a good question for leaders or business managers. I think it's a very good question, so first let me come back to dignity. For frontline workers in your company, here's a very simple thing that you could do today after listening to this podcast, practice saying this simple phrase, "Thank you for your work." Notice, look, people in the eye, feel deep gratitude for what they provide you and those around us, everything from a server bringing us a meal outside of a work context to a man planting shrubs outside of office building. And it's high time that we really actually recognized them, and saw the image of God being expressed in the works of millions and millions of people. And I think really just looking people in the eye and saying thank you for your work and feeling a deep appreciation for those that serve would be just the first step. So I actually think that's the first kind of practical thing that leaders can do is just recognize that.

Jeff Haanen: ([24:08](#))

The second, let me say this, get educated. So the world of workforce development in the United States is not a small world. In Christian circles, we hardly ever talk about it, but it's a huge world. So this is a field of work that it focuses on developing the skills and opportunities of lower wage workers. And for example, one thing around this is the name of Steven Dawson. He's written a series of six papers called the Pinkerton Papers and Job Quality and how we need to think about serving low wage workers, which we'll attach on these podcast notes. But it's an incredible place to start for anybody who really wants to care about how do I love our city's laborers? How do we love those frontline laborers even that I know that are even in my company? Education, learning, stepping back and thinking, "what do I not know?" I think it's actually a very important one before we kind of come in with solutions.

Jeff Haanen: ([24:59](#))

And then third, once you've gotten more educated, a little bit more about frontline workers. This is one of the things I was alluding to earlier, giveaway power. So many lower wage workers are used to just being told what to do, punch in, punch out, how to fulfill that order, when to go, when to come. I've seen this time and time again, like a boss will start a new program in his company, he's going to serve low wage workers, we're going to love our neighbors or self, and there's no interest and nobody cares about it, and the boss throws up his hands and says, "Well,



I tried not my fault," sort of a thing. But I think the solution is not necessarily here by starting with a new benefits program, but it's first by asking, what are the hopes and dreams of your workers?

Jeff Haanen: [\(25:36\)](#)

I've seen several companies do this and the results are actually really powerful. You hear amazing creative solutions even to business or work problems that are owned by the workforce because they thought of them, they were closest to them. I think a lot of CEOs and I'm one of them, I feel this pressure to kind of have to have the solutions for every business challenge that we're facing rather than seeing what are the solutions> do you know those? So I actually think a really redemptive angle of caring for our city's laborers is finding creative ways to give away power.

Joanna Meyer: [\(26:08\)](#)

Yeah, I was at a local custodial company, a commercial planning company recently, and they had a picture of every employee on the wall with their name, and they had a quote from them under them, what is your dream? And it was fascinating to hear what they were aiming for, what their work was building towards. And so dignifying rather than just being transactional and viewing them, what building were they going to clean? Did they have the supplies? Get there, get it done, but they actually stopped to say, what's the heart desire of our workers and how can this work enable them to achieve it. Very cool. How do you think the church can better see and serve people working low wage jobs?

Jeff Haanen: [\(26:42\)](#)

Well, one I think is just start the conversations, just start the conversation. Many churches have focused on the very poor, like homeless addicted destitute or overseas missions projects, and those are obviously both very important, but they've literally never thought of how they might first understand and then serve lower wage workers or working class workers in their own congregation. So what I would love to see from pastors and church leadership teams across the US, simply take time to listen to their congregation, share about their daily work and how they feel about what they do all day long. Studs Terkel did it in his awesome book in the 1970s called Working. He wrote this book and it was just stories of men and women talking about what they did all day and how they felt about what they were doing. So I think that is just a really important thing.

Jeff Haanen: [\(27:30\)](#)

One of the real challenges though, I think for local churches is churches tend to bifurcate professionals with professionals and working class with working class. And so this actually, even for churches, this may take in a sense a migration of thinking, who are the other churches that are serving maybe a different population that I don't know and I don't understand, how can we understand and to listen well to the lived experiences of men and women in those congregations as well.

Joanna Meyer: [\(27:57\)](#)



Yeah, and I think it also comes from the conviction that work is a powerful tool in the discipleship of your people. And so as you think about knowing your congregation, their needs, knowing their work is vital to that process, it's not a side issue, it really runs right through the heart of your people and how they work with God.

Jeff Haanen: [\(28:16\)](#)

And that goes right to the core of Denver Institute for faith & Work. If we are equipping the saints for works of service, we must know something about their context for works of service, right? We have to actually know something and an order to do discipleship, to do theology, to do sermons, to do that stuff well, and to be sending out God's people into the secular age, if you don't know anything about the context of what you're sending them out to, discipleship will just be very difficult and very thin. It'll be very difficult for workers to connect the dots.

Joanna Meyer: [\(28:43\)](#)

Yeah. Jeff, as we wrap up our conversation today, what's one thing you'd like listeners to do based on this discussion.

Jeff Haanen: [\(28:50\)](#)

Yeah, one action point from this podcast, let me just point to the first thing I was saying, respect. See the laborers in your life, and in your community, maybe even in your workplace and just tell them genuinely, "Thank you for your work." Anybody can do that in and anybody can mean that. I think this is the contribution God's people and our culture can make to start off with us to see and to appreciate and to listen and to understand. So just try that today and look somebody in the eye and tell them, "Thank you for your work."

Joanna Meyer: [\(29:22\)](#)

Yeah, I've been thinking about that too. I live in an economically mixed neighborhood and so I can make choices about who I interact with. I can choose to go to one target or another, and I'll see very, very different populations of people. And I'm realizing that I could choose to be present and watch and learn and be more intentional about that. So for me, that means going to Walmart in the depths of Aurora near the Aurora Town Center on a Sunday and just being present. It's more chaotic, it's more crowded and yet it allows me just to be present with my neighbors in a way that's different than I'm just in my car and picking the most convenient, easy, maybe middle-class place for me to be shopping.

Jeff Haanen: [\(29:59\)](#)

And I love what you said, like go to Walmart, look somebody in the eye and say, "Thank you for your work." And it's almost code for "You are God's image bearer right now in this place, providing something important to the world," right? If the great divide is a dignity divide in the United States, we can do a lot about that as God's people.

Joanna Meyer: [\(30:16\)](#)



Yeah, even just watching. I don't know if you pay attention to grocery store checkers and all of us interact with that particular role in our daily lives and they have some amazing hacks. If you find a checker that's motivated about their job, you'll see they have all kinds of tips and tricks that they do to make that line flow smoothly. And so I just watch, I often just affirm, I'd say like, "You're amazing at your job. How long have you been doing this?" I asked a young man the other day, I said, "How long have you been working as a checker? Because you're phenomenal, you just get people through this line faster than anybody else who's working here." And he'd only been there six months and I just thought you can call out. I don't mean that to be condescending at all, it's noticing and calling out the giftedness or the talents of people around you and any of our listeners can do that in the coming week. That's awesome.

Joanna Meyer: ([31:00](#))

Well, Jeff, thanks for this conversation. If this has intrigued you, we have a few resources for you. The first is on Thursday, August 19th, we'll be having a lunchtime conversation called Loving Our City's Laborers. Jeff will be sharing about this topic and we'll also be hearing from State Senator James Coleman, J.J. Ament, who's the President of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and Julie Stone of Gary Community Investments. You can find details for that at denverinstitute.org on the events page. And in our show notes, we will link to a free download of Jeff's Christianity Today article God of the Second Shift and you'll be also able to get more information about Jeff's book when it's ready to release in the fall of 2022. And we'll also link to a resource. You described Jeff, the Pinkerton Papers. Tell us again what the Pinkerton Papers are.

Jeff Haanen: ([31:48](#))

On job quality and workforce development. It's just a good place to start if you want to get more educated about this world.

Joanna Meyer: ([31:53](#))

Yeah, easy, accessible. We'll have a link to that in the show notes. So thanks for listening today, I hope we have challenged your thinking and given you a couple of steps that you can take to better love and serve your neighbors. We'll see you in two weeks everybody. If you've enjoyed this episode of the Faith & Work Podcast, please subscribe, leave a review or share it with a friend. Your support is critical to helping other listeners discover this vital resource. The Faith & Work Podcast is produced by Denver Institute for Faith & Work where we believe that work is a way to love God and serve our neighbors. To learn more or to make a financial contribution, visit denverinstitute.org.