

# Biblical Touch in Wages

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## ABSTRACT

This article discloses the church's social teaching that denounces capitalist thinking, because workers are seen only as labourers. Workers who work only by relying on the spirit of love could accept their life situations patiently and steadfastly. Work has a place of honor in the sight of God. By exploring biblical texts the concept of wage was analysed. This research was conducted through participative observation and interviews by employing the classical phenomenology, as well as the hermeneutic approach, while non-empirical data collection method was done by interpreting biblical text based on theologians. Workers, especially Christians, generally believe in doing their work based on the principle of obedience. This attitude reflects the value of the teachings of faith. Giving oneself through service in work can be seen as a calling in carrying out the mission of the Church has become an alternative meaning of wages.

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## 1. Introduction

Salary is money earned by employees due to work or services performed to companies/agencies or individuals as employers. Wages are rights in the form of money as compensation for work that has been carried out from the entrepreneur or employer to the worker/labourer which is determined and paid in accordance with the work agreement, law, including allowances for the worker/laborer and his/her family. Existing companies certainly speak the language of business, so the cost of salaries or wages reported in the company's financial statements will be followed up by top management in evaluating their performance. If the salary of the head of a division within the company is not even supported by the targeted achievement, an evaluation will be carried out, which can be in the form of a decrease in salary, job transfer, dismissal and so on. In this way, the wages of a worker is related his/her performance.

There is a different understanding of wages from the company's point of view to a biblical ones. The Gospel of Matthew 20:1-16 emphasizes a theological approach that offers the concept of generosity. God wants people to accept gifts as they are, and God is still free to give from His own to anyone. God does not judge his servant on the basis of success, but with the talent he has and how he responds to the work of grace as much as possible. This bible text is implicitly similar to Javanese philosophy of *Nrimo Ing Pandum*. The

keywords entail the obligation of human to work in his life. The law of work is confirmed in 2 Thess 3:6-10, which reads as follows:

*“But we command you, brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us the teaching that you have received from us. For you yourselves know you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you. Nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but work with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. Not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this, if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”*

From this verse of scripture, Paul teaches work to provide for himself and his family. Work is a matter of living together.

In general the orientation of the practice of daily life should be in harmony with the teachings of one's religious faith. Romans 8:28, described that God is working with us. This effort is necessary because people who practice their faith correctly are those who regulate their lives, actions and activities according to that true faith. This asserts that wisdom and human clothing do not become a measure.

In the world of work, it is not uncommon to find workers who do not even get their worth in terms of wages. Wealth is piling up in the hands of tiny minority, while a very large number of workers are in conditions that are increasingly difficult to bear, wages are low and even reaching the level of hunger, which is detrimental to health, morality, and religious faith. This was promulgated as *Mater et Magistra*. The title of *Mater et Magistra* means ‘mother and teacher’, refers to the role of the church. *Mater et Magistra* is an encyclical written by Pope John XXIII on the topic of Christianity and Social Progress. Whatever conditions experienced by workers, especially for Christian workers who work in God's field, of course they are required to be rational in their expectations. Obedience is sometimes demanded by sacrificial workers of their own free will, and obedience is often demanded for the sake of unity and efficient cooperation. The verse Hebrew 13:17 emphasizes that obedience to the leader reflects obedience to God.

Poverty paralyzes the poor against injustice. The less property they have, the more sacred they are, and the more inadequate they are. To take from those who are due means to commit a very serious sin. The oppressed's cries would call to the heavens inviting vengeance:

*“Labourers mowed your fields, and you cheated them- listen to the wages that you kept back; calling out. Realize that the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of The Lord of hosts” (James 5:4)*

This revelation states a worker who receives his wages because of the work he has done, but his wages are not received as expected. Through “logical” contemplation, a worker will change his place of work if he feels that wages are not suitable, and where certain elements of work are less or even not satisfied.

This article emphasizes wages of workers, especially those who are Christian, working in God's field even when they do not obtain work wages as expected. Several factors, that cannot be explained rationally, are sometimes able to help a worker to survive. A faith of

christian worker sometimes believe that his work would be able to move him to always be grateful. God participates in history in human life.

## 2. Method

This type of research is based on a hermeneutic approach; a science that interprets texts, because the interpretation of the biblical text is based on theologians who generally use the methodological approach of experts (Interpretation of Biblical New Testament, 2006). The task of hermeneutics is to avoid errors in interpreting the text of Scripture. Thus the source of the Bible is a non-empirical source. In addition, in this study, observations were made on the collection of empirical data through participant observation and interviews with informants and related data collection, using a classical phenomenology approach. Thus this research is also based on the interpretive religious paradigm.

The use of the word wages were sought and then referred to the text of the Bible, as well as related church documents. Further, the current understanding of employee salaries were explored. In general, leaders who run a business would emphasize on productivity and efficiency. Meanwhile, from the worker's point of view, respondents will respond differently to the wages they receive. Respondents as informants in this interview are workers who are Christian, and who believe God is working in their lives. The respondents are very close and are willing to share their thoughts with researcher.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1. The Church's Social Teachings

Pope Leo XIII published *Rerum Novarum* as the basic Charter of the Social Order. It discusses the relationship between labor and capital, as well as government and its citizens. Generally, to meet the needs of human life requires work, even in the fields to produce various crops, which are exchanged for wages. The church's action is to elevate the value of virtue in the dignity of poverty, such that can be seen in Mark 6:3

*"Is not he the carpenter, the son of Mary?"*

This revelation implies that the value and nobility of man lies in his life style, in his virtue. The manual labor's work of the family of Nazareth, the carpenter, has a place of honor in God's sight. The ascetics also work, even if the work of the hands, this is part of their contemplative life.

Such property can not be acquired without productive labour. A work is personal for a person because he/she works hard for himself, and the work is done because it is needed. The Church voiced the establishment of institutions to overcome poverty, calls for the State to intervene, protection of private property, fair wages and the right to form unions.

Business companies, especially manufacturing companies, generally have a workforce. The production process it does requires material costs, labor costs and other indirect costs. Cost is claimed as the sacrifice of economic resources, which is measured in units of money for a particular purpose.

### 3.2. The Wages of Company Labour

Company management, especially top management need information, specifically a cost information. The company management does not have a measure of whether the input sacrificed has a lower economic value than the output value, so that based on accounting reports, especially the income statement prepared to top management, a decision will be taken if the labor cost component is not efficient. Efficiency is the key word, so labor costs are indirectly related to productivity. Skill level, productivity management, efficiency are the benchmarks for the management. Sometimes, companies have a budget as a standard in carrying out production operations, therefore if there is a standard deviation, information will be obtained which is referred to as an unfavorable difference. In a research, Indriyani (2014) revealed that salary affects productivity in 628 workers [1]. It is clear that Human Resources (HR), must have requirements in the existing recruitment, as written by the Lecturer Team of Wijaya Putra University (2009), that the purpose of HR selection is basically to increase efficiency, effectiveness, as well as productivity in addition to others [2]. It can be concluded that if companies are future-oriented, then they will strive to maintain the companies' going concern. It should be noted and known that in terms of work, John Paul II did not share this view, where he emphasized that labor is the subject whose existence transcends capital.

### 3.3. The Wages of God's Workers

God wants everyone to receive God's gifts as they are. In general, everyone tends to compare one another. This shows the unwillingness of people to see the brilliance of other people's achievements. God is free to give His possessions to anyone He wishes. The biblical text of Matthew 20:1-16a, reads

*"Now the kingdom of heaven, is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. 2. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. 3. Going out of the third hour he saw standing idle in the market place. 4. and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage. 5. So they went. At about the six hour and again about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. 6 Then about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men and standing around, and he said to them," Why have you been standing here idle all day? 7 Because no one has hired us" they answered. He said to them, "You go to my vineyard too". 8 In the evening the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with last arrival and ending with the first". 9. So Those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. 10. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they received one denarius each. 11. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. 12 "The men who came last they said "have done only one hour, and you have treated them, the same as, though we have done a heavy days in all the heat." 13 He answered one of them and said : "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? 14. Take your earnings and go; I choose to pay the last-comer as much as I pay you. 15. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious, because I am generous?" 16. Thus the last will be first, and the first, last. "*

God wants to offer His grace to all people. We must not be jealous of the spiritual blessings received by others. The appreciation of this verse emphasizes the hidden envy. God works through people. God gives an assessment of the response of the gift of mercy. It is natural to understand that the wages received by a person indicate the employer's freedom in assessing the achievement of subordinates

Here is an example stated by researcher's informants. I interviewed an errand staff who serves a school for 15 years, and obtains a salary of Rp1.500.000. He always ask for a better and prosperous job. I interviewed another informant who is a security staff who works at the same school, and has signed a contract agreement with wages ranging from Rp1.500.000 to Rp2.000.000. He sadly expressed that his friend who works as security in Bank get sallary around Rp3.000.000 to Rp4.000.000. During an interview, it was found that the security staff concerned was not the wages but to be grateful for God's grace. His dedication shows that he is a truly sincere servant of God. The following is an example of an interview with a school worker.

*"Lhaa is my salary very low...I am working hard for twenty years, up to now I could not help and afford our children for school..... By the way .... regarding my application of loan, is it being processed, Sir?"*

The following salary information is for comparison purposes.

**Table 1. Salary of civil servants, class II (junior high school graduates up to D3) 2021**

Group II	Nominal salary per month (years of service)
Middle school graduate up to D3	
II A	Rp 2.022.200 (0 years)–Rp 3.373.600 (33 years)
II B	Rp 2.208.400 (3 years) –Rp 3.516.300 (33 years)
II C	Rp 2.301.800 (3 years) –Rp. 3.665.000 (33 years)
II D	Rp 2.399.200 (3 years) –Rp. 3.820.000 (33 years)

Further, related to wages, the following is an example of a scripture verse. The text of Luke 19:11-27 explores the dynamics of grace, in the parable of the Minas.

*11 While the people were listening to this he went on the tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and they imagined the kingdom of God was going to show itself then and there. 12 Accordingly he said, "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to be appointed king and afterward return. 13 He summoned ten of his servants and gave them ten pounds,""Do business with these" he told them "until I get back" . 14 But his compatriots detested him and sent a delegation to follow him with this message "We do not want this man to be our king". 15 Now on his returned having received his appointment as king, that he sent for those servants, to whom he had given the money. to find out what profit each had made. 16 The first came in and said, 'Sir, your pound has brought in ten. 17 "Well done, my good servant!". He replied "Since you have proved yourself faithfull in a very small thing, and you shall have the government of ten cities." 18 Then came the second and said," Sir, your one pound has made five. 19 To this one also he said,"And you shall be in charge of five cities."*



20 Next came the other said "Sir, here is your pound. I put in away and safely in a piece of linen. 21 Because I was afraid of you; for you are an exacting man; you pick up what you have not to put down and you reap what you have not sown. He said to the man, Evil servant, I will judge you according to your own words. You already know that I am a hard man, who takes what I have not laid down and reaps what I have not sown. 22. "You wicked servant!" he said "Out of of your own mouth I condemn you. So you knew I was an exacting man picking up what I have not put down and reaping what I have not sown?" 23 Then why did you not with interest." 24 And he said to those standing by : "Take the pound to him, But Sir he has ten pounds". 25 And they said to him, But, sir, he has pounds..... 26 "I tell you, to everyone who has will be given more, but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 27 But as for my enemies, who did not want me for their king, bring them here and execute them in my presence."

One's greatness is shown by taking care of important matters in the company. Company leaders would be happy if there are workers who are loyal in doing the work. Based on the inspiration from the scriptures, we can refer to how to be the disciples of Jesus. Jesus demands that His disciples are faithful in life. The gift of grace does not depend on its size, either big or small. As recipients of grace, we can not demand anything from the Giver. The distribution of blessings, graces and human efforts has its laws and dynamics. Multiplication, rapid progress, complete decline depend also on human efforts. Even though this grace has dynamics, it is possible for low-class workers or lower castes, who have limitations in education, talents to take the initiative. This is not easy as everyone says. Every worker who becomes a disciple of Jesus will consider the reward for him, which is received from the master himself, because they believe that they will participate in the kingdom of God. If this parable is related to the stated Matthew's, it seems that the lower class workers are not allowed to complain, because their rights are very limited. Likewise, if it is associated with Luke's text, the workers seem to just accept the fate that exists, with the hope that God himself will give abundance.

All the blessings we receive are not our effort, but because of God's grace. Implicitly, the verse of the holy book teaches that everyone must love others, including the employer's obligation to his subordinates. This finding is in accordance with another staff member, also an informant, who has retired and is still receiving monthly pension of Rp699.000, from the school where he has served for thirty years, and also an employee who has served 34 years in an orphanage under the auspices of a Christian foundation, and received a final salary of Rp1.200.000. The following is an example of an interview with a researcher's colleague, a librarian, from an educational institution in Surabaya

- Researcher : How are you, Mam? I have not seen you at school.  
Informant : Yo...that's me . That's all I am...I am staying at home  
Researcher : *lhooo*...do you not work anymore??...Are you well retired? It seems you have big envelope. Do they pay you in advance?  
Informant : No...will you have enough for Rp699.000 per month?...For what can this amount buy? ...[this is] work for God, that's all.

According to theologians, the scripture text reveals that one day, he was promised that those who now have high positions, will turn around to help. God as the master of the employer has the right to give appropriate positions to workers in the future. Vice versa.

### **3.4. The Wage of Obedience**

The following is an example that the wages of working from our own hands are also pleasing to God. Work is a sacred calling. A work from human hands should also be appreciated by other humans. Hand labor is one way of changing the world as the “holy priesthood” in the world's field. The guidelines for obedience of workers with a Christian background are Saint Joseph, a carpenter, a teacher in action, and a disciple in spirit. Work is seen as a noble task in building the world. The text of the scriptures related to the aspect of obedience can be seen in the verse of the Book of Genesis 1:26 which states God creates the human who masters of the fish of the sea, includes the birds, the cattle, the animals upon the earth.

Humans were created to relate to other creatures. God as creator, does not just create. Unlike a watchmaker, who makes a clock and then sells it and did not know anymore about the clock he made after the sales, God continues to work and intervene in people's lives. Therefore, we should not be afraid and worry. As a working people, we will have confidence that God is with the workers. God is also a worker, and this can be seen from the text of the Holy Bible Genesis 2:2 which states God completed the work he had made. He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He has been doing. Genesis 2:15 implies that God created humans as workers, which states The Lord God took the man and set him to cultivate and take care of himself.

It can be concluded that the work is a gift from God, where humans are partners of God as workers. From the description, it shows that the spirituality of the workers is a call to get closer to God through the work they do [3]. Saint Joseph is an example of a good teacher in obeying what God has given, as well as being a human worker as His disciple.

### **3.5. The Wages of Social Responsibility**

Thess 3:6-10, emphasizes that if you don't work, you don't eat. Humans are social creatures who need each other. Families of workers need food and drink as well as health and recreation. Thus, a worker who is the head of the family is required to at least fulfill some of these needs. The problem is whether with limited wages, can these things be done?

### **3.6. The Wages of Tithe**

Christians believe that there are many different vocations, so that even lay members can work for the Church. In his work, a Christian worker is obliged to uphold his moral obligations for the development and apostolic tasks of the Church. The provision of wages received in the form of tithes or collections in the church is intended to realize the sharing of love for the poor and needy. Sharing the blessings that have been received from God, in the form of collections in the Church, that has been explicitly written in Malachi 3:10, where this text states that God repays the offerings of His people. Schools in remote areas that need renovation, funding for the study of prospective priests, building churches that

require a larger capacity to accommodate people, are examples of the responsibility of each congregation to the church.

### 3.7. *Narimo ing Pandhum*

The presentation of this article is actually almost similar to the Javanese culture that has been rooted for a long time, namely the term "*Narimo Ing Pandum*". This short sentence is a philosophy about the attitude of total acceptance of an event that has been experienced by a person, where the power that has been done feels limited. Cahyarini (2021) writes that the attitude of accepting a problem faced by a person, is showing an attitude of managing emotions to support the cognitive process [4]. The solution obtained including patience, gratitude, and narimo, are interrelated elements, so they need to be focussed. "*Narimo Ing Pandum*" emphasizes self-acceptance that is at peace with the situation, a backing towards introspection. The description of this philosophy will reveal the existence of peace of mind, giving thanks, practicing patience. "*Narimo Ing Pandum, Makaryo Ing Nyoto*" is so complete, that in addition to the "*nrimo*" (acceptance) attitude, working as well as possible is also a condition.

The following are some views of researcher's colleagues as informants who give reasons about someone who can be '*nrimo*', where this can be seen as an implicit element of the faith.

- Informant 1 : There is no other choice.
- Informant 2 : Sincerity brings peace, and in peace people find happiness.
- Informant 3 : Surrender to Divine providence. To get there, a long process is necessary. We try our best and our ability, but God has other mysterious plans
- Informant 4 : Sincerity comes from faith in God.
- Informant 5 : Because of a sense of resignation and helplessness against a greater power, while oneself has limited power.
- Informant 6 : The Virgin Mary said "It will be done to me according to your word". It is not easy. It must be learned if we are truly Catholic. In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, let the cup pass from Him, nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.

Those informants who have expressed their feelings have implied that God's call to work has deeply affected them. The application of the concept of service to others is the main characteristic of a Christian's calling rather than serving.

## 4. Conclusion

Workers, through their calling, are expected to give love and be fruitful to others. Workers should deserve to have a small amount of property for the wages they have received, after fulfilling the basic needs of their families in addition to their health aspects. Kurniawan (2019) in his article asserts that justice can not be realized, as long as the principles of love and compassion for the weak are not built.



The novelty of this research lies in the information from informants who are willing to express their salary complaints. Very few informants among church workers who are willing to disclose their wages. The beautiful church social teaching about fair wages is difficult to implement, in the sense that no approach is no longer orthodoxy, but autopraxis. The church's social teachings have been applied to the Javanese cultural environment, namely *narimo ing pandum*.

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