

## **Sermon**

I doubt it will surprise you much to know that weekday mornings are quite boisterous in the Lattimer household. There is typically a chorus of reminders. Brush your teeth. You have to get water into your backpack. Almost time for the bus! Get something to eat. You have to get dressed! Keep moving. The bus is gonna be here. Backpacks - get your backpacks and a fleece - Ben, is your storytelling distracting or helping? :-)  
The bus is coming!

Everyone knows the drill. The bus comes at the same time 5 days a week. But the reminders keep everyone on track right up through the end.

Our scripture reading this morning is fully of reminders - things we already know - but it began with the ominous words, "The end of all things are near." And I will confess that when I hear that phrase the first image that comes to mind is some guy on a street corner yelling it at passersby - the end is near!

But I suspect that Peter had a different tone of voice in mind when he was writing this. In the verses that lead up to what we heard read - it is very clear that Peter is writing to a church that is being persecuted - to people who are suffering. They are ridiculed for not living like everyone else - for not being extravagant in their food or drink or judgment of others. He is trying to offer comfort not condemnation.

And so the reminders that Peter lists - could be heard more like the reminders to catch the bus. It's possible his tone is encouraging, not ominous or threatening. The message is not: the end is near so sit back and watch what God does - instead it is we have work to do, so DON'T sit back. The message feels closer to: You already know what to do - keep loving each other - you've almost made it to the end - keep moving. The horizon is not so far off - Keep sharing hospitality and grace. The time is almost here - keep going strong.

Peter tells the church - God has given you work to do in the world and it matters that you do it.

Our relationship to work is varied and complex. Some of us do work to which we feel called. Some have retired from their working life. Still others work just to put food on the table. Some do work that is highly valued by our society - and some do the work that no one else would want to do. Some love our work, some hate it, and many are somewhere in between depending on the day.

We can get stuck thinking of "work" as only the things we do for which we are compensated. Thus limiting our view of the caregiving, running a household, community organizing, serving on a committee or a board, coaching a child's team, or feeding our family - kinds of work that many of us engage in every day.

God has given you work to do in the world and it matters that you do it.

Which is not the same as God has given you a job.

It's closer to: God has given you gifts - and a calling to use them. Many of us are uncomfortable with the language of calling. We typically only talk about it in terms of ministry and clergy. We call people to be into the ministry. We call pastors to come to our church, but we hire a director of human resources. We hire an administrative assistant, we hire a store clerk. But I would argue that we are each called. You are called. Each of you.

It is a shame we have so narrowed our view of God's calling in our lives to something that only some receive - or something that requires a very particular type of job. Kathleen Cahalan, in her essay on the stewardship of work, tells the story of Barbara, who was questioning her professional direction - she felt guilty for having marketing skills and worried if what she did mattered or if it had any lasting good. A counselor told Barbara something that has stuck with her: You know, you don't have to be working for a nonprofit to be doing something noble. Providing for your family is noble. Being a good, kind manager and co-worker is noble. There are many things you can do on a daily basis that do broader good...

As we reflect on how we might steward our work - how we care for the resources and gifts we've been giving so that they can do what they are meant to do - maybe this is the reminder that we need from Peter:

You are called - God has given you work to do in the world and it matters that you do it.

This is his reminder in the letter as well. He tells the church the end is near - the horizon is near, so keep going strong. Because it matters to the world. Your work has value.

No matter your job or your particular set of gifts - your work has value because of who you are. You are a steward of the grace of God. You are a steward of God's grace, Peter says - So no matter where you are, speak to others as one speaking with the words of God - serve with the strength and vigor of God. You are a steward of Grace. You are.

These gifts you have been given - they are grace. The calling on your life - it's grace. And grace is meant to be extended, shared, spread, expanded. Grace is a resource that can be used anywhere and everywhere we find ourselves - in whatever work or job we happen to be doing.

How would it change your daily interactions if you truly believed that? Or if you chose to live as if you did?

How would you speak to people if you took seriously that you are God's image in the world - and that your words are the very words of God, as Peter writes?

In the spaces where you get paid - and in the ones you do not - how might you tend to grace in ways that send it spiraling out beyond you?

Being a steward of God's grace at all times and in all situations feels overwhelming. Impossible even.

And so I feel like I should confess to you - that even with all the reminders and encouragement in our morning routine - we missed the bus like 4 times in the last 2 weeks. I think our worst days were the ones that followed my sermon on stewarding our time - believe me the irony was not lost on me.

But part of being a good steward - of caring for and tending to a resource we've been given - is also recognizing that the gift is for us too. If we steward grace in ways that share it - we must also steward in ways that let it seep into us. We need grace - we aren't gonna get it right. We are gonna forget what we are supposed to do or who we are supposed to be. We are gonna miss the bus. Or not run all the way through the finish line. It's gonna happen.

We are gonna get impatient or judgy or speak harshly or devalue our gifts or wonder if what we are doing even matters at all...

And there is something very reassuring to me that grace is what is given in those moments for us to steward. Not punishment. Not abandonment. Grace.

The bus is almost here. You know what you need to do...

Love each other genuinely - love covers a multitude of sins.

Open your homes and your lives to one another without complaining

Use your gifts - each of you have them - you are called.

Be a faithful steward of God's grace.

Remember that when you speak you are doing so as ones who speak God's word.

Serve - use the strength God gives to serve.

So that in all things God may be honored through Jesus - to him be power and glory forever and always. Amen.