

New Life @ WORK

David Kim is the director for the Center on Work and Faith in New York. Work and Faith, as a core ministry for the Redeemer Lutheran Church, seeks to help believers put faith to work, at work. Apparently there is global interest in the topic as work consumes more of our time, for less money, and makes fewer promises of meaning, security, and identity in the classic sense. People are just happy to have a job.

MESSAGE: If you're trying to be that whole person, what does that mean? honesty with your time? Sharing your faith? What does it mean to blend these lives?

KIM: One, it's examining your motivations for work. A lot of people go to work just to make a living, and that's fine, but when you look at Genesis, work was created to be much more than how we make our living. [It] was to be an expression of our identity as people created in the image of God. And so [for us] work, instead of being the expression of our identity, is the source of our identity. We're so affected by our workplace because so many of us derive our worth, our value, from our work. The gospel is able to reorient our values, so we can see that work was created to be a good expression of the divine image.

Second, also changing the way we interact with our coworkers.

Unfortunately, we don't see our colleagues as people created in the image of God. We see them kind of as a means to an end, away to get our work done, move up the work ladder. The gospel is able to change our view in how we relate to our coworkers. A concrete way we can see this is in the way we give feedback.

We're always giving and receiving feedback. We want to teach people what it means to give redemptive feedback, and how you receive feedback redemptively. So when you're receiving your progress report, how do you respond to critical feedback? The gospel informs how we can receive critical feedback graciously, and be grateful for an opportunity to grow instead of being negative at the negative feedback we can receive. So that's a concrete way in which we can show God's work in our own lives.

Third, the purpose of our work. What is the purpose of our work? What is its impact on our company, our city, our country? our world? And how does it bring glory to God? Every profession has a way to answer those questions. We have seen in the past couple of years that people weren't asking these questions. They were just doing the jobs they were told, instead of asking the larger questions of what's the purpose of my work and, to that purpose, what kind of work glorifies God?

MESSAGE: Anything else?

KIM: Yes, perseverance is such a keyword when it comes to work and faith. In the book of Hebrews it's an important theme. When it comes to work—not to say that we should stay in our work without purpose and meaning, but—a lot of times God is calling us to persevere. he will provide a particular measure of grace to enable us to be an agent of change. A lot of times I think the younger generation doesn't like to move on to the next job. That's a little concerning, because there's such a desire for meaning that when the younger generation sees obstacles and hurdles, it's a lot easier for them to jump ship.

I wonder if this idea of perseverance is being properly taught and

cultivated? Sometimes God does call us to jump ship, change jobs. Other times, God calls us to persevere. If we are not equipping people to say "No, perseverance is part of what it means to me to be God's child," then I don't know who will be left in these companies that need that Christian witness to bring about change and redemption and healing.

MESSAGE: So many people really want to do something that means something. So many jobs that we get into, especially starting out, don't seem like they mean any- thing. So how do you find that meaning and satisfaction to keep going?

KIM: For the millennials, a lot of the satisfaction is driven by social good, with the explosion of social media as an example. Meaning is found in relational connectivity, but also relational connectivity that has a social good, whether it's micro financing or connecting people through social media with something like Kick starter. So I think "meaningful" for the millennials is really found in social good and upon relationship building.

MESSAGE: Can you talk to me a little bit about calling? I'm hearing you redefine the way in which we think of work and interact with it. And so it seems as though wherever you are you can find fulfillment in who you are as an expression of him. So does that take away a sense of a specific calling that utilizes your talents and gifts?

KIM: Yeah, that's a big question here. I think people focus on calling in terms of What jobs should I have? What profession should I work toward? I tell people, If you don't know how to hear the Caller, it doesn't matter what job you take, at least from a Christian perspective. That if you end up going into finance or farming, if you don't know how to hear the voice of the Caller, it doesn't make much difference because, you know, how are you going to know what it means to be faithful in what you're doing if you're not attentive to the leading of God through his Word and through his Spirit? I think that's really a big challenge for Christians to say, "Am I willing to surrender all that I am to God to allow him to lead me?" And sometimes he's going to lead me into places that I don't want to go, but I have to trust that that's part of his whole plan for my life and that's going to equip me in my life and in areas that I need to grow in so that I'll be faithful in the particular occupational calling that he might bring to me. When you're in a relationship with God and trying to obey him, Scripture gives us the promise that he leads us. he's our shepherd. We can take comfort in God's promises, the doors we will go through, and the people we will meet.

MESSAGE: Say I'm in a job and for whatever reason it's particularly frustrating. I'm frustrated in my purpose, my motivation. It was different for Adam and Eve in the garden. They dressed the garden, and everything worked properly. They were effectual. But this, now, this is not what God designed.

KIM: I think it helps to look at the larger story. If you enter the story part- way through, you might not understand what's going on. And I think that's the same when we experience pain and brokenness in our workplaces and frustration, which can mean you're in the wrong job, or that you're in the right place and God is letting you see the brokenness so that it helps you to under- stand why he put you there.

If you think about the vision in Ezekiel 37, the valley of dry bones, God takes Ezekiel to a mass grave and says, What do you see here? he leads Ezekiel to see the bones of his people, and that's extremely disheartening,

to say the least. he asks Ezekiel, "Can these dry bones live?" [When you are] experiencing the particular brokenness and heartache in a certain field, then you have the ability to change it. When we don't see that larger narrative, when we don't see the brokenness of our world, it just leads to complaining, and God certainly does not appreciate complaining and grumbling. But when we see that larger narrative, that Jesus came to our broken world, that he was tempted in every way possible, so that he could become our great high priest, so that he c o u l d become our source of grace in times of need, I think that changes the story a little bit so that when you go through the pain of frustration at work, instead of just frustration, it's part of a larger story of how is God's grace at work here and can it change my workplace?

Going back to the Ezekiel narrative, God says to Ezekiel, son of man, I want you to prophesy. he could have made the dry bones come to life himself, but he had Ezekiel preach, the human agent, in order to bring about that life, that restoration. That's God calling every Christian. When we began to see the brokenness that we experience—whether it's a broken water cooler or evil bosses—that's part of the experience. how is God at work to redeem and to restore things that have become fallen and broken?

When No one Cares about Your Purpose

How is this for transparency? As I write this, we are awaiting news from our parent organization regarding our professional fate. Our books, magazines, and material aids for those seeking spiritual truth are moving upstream, swimming for dear life in the digital universe.

Like many of our readers—even you perhaps—we have had to reconcile purpose with profits. We may see our role—the prophetic voice of change, if you will—but we, alas, also see the ebbing support for the Word of God and the resulting ebb in our bottom line.

I share this to make two points, two object lessons I'm garnering from the whole pleasant experience.

In our conundrum lays a recognizable dilemma, but one that does not receive adequate attention or preparation. Your purpose and calling may not be what you think it is, or your purpose and calling may not be embraced by those around you. Your purpose and calling may fly directly in the face of the interests and objectives of those around you, hence the need to remove you from the arena.

You see, while you can read about 40 days to discover your purpose, it could take a lifetime to be OK with the fact that some will reject it and you. Yet people who are out of work, laid off, passed over, or lingering in that frustrating netherworld of mismatched talents and everyday routine know this very well. They, maybe I, will soon wonder, how can this possibly fit into God's plan for my life? Being overlooked, undervalued, and misjudged?

Long before whistle blowers and whistle blower legislation to protect said people, God's prophets were snubbed by market forces.

Isaiah, after all, along with the beautiful foretelling of the coming of the Son of God, also had the unwelcome task of calling the king out. his whole life preached a sermon: his name means "Jehovah saves." he named his children Shear Jashub, meaning "a remnant will be saved; a remnant shall return" and Maher-shalal-hash-baz—"speed the spoil, hasten the prey." According to the

Bible, Mrs. Isaiah “prophesied” as a time marker. She would bear children, and by the time they could say “mama” and “dada,” the current kingdom would be overthrown. From his vision-based vantage point, posted high along the city wall, he could make out the sure advance of the stealthy conquering soldiers of Persia. “Babylon is fallen! is fallen,” he cried out (emphasis supplied), Isaiah 21. Yeah, nobody wants to be that guy. That’s an unpopular message for some. And Isaiah, as so many of the prophets of old (and those who suffer today), faced the worst because of his calling and purpose. “They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented” (Hebrews 11:37).

Strange as it may be, that gives me comfort. Even Isaiah could make out a transcendent and unexplainable peace-giving truth in the midst of his dilemma: “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you” (Isaiah 43:2).

So, back to the two lessons.

First, don’t fire the prophets in your life. Don’t put away the Word of God that somehow reads your inner motives and challenges you. Pick up the phone when your mother calls you, who mysteriously knows you are not eating right even though you are 40. Take out the ear buds so you don’t drown out the still small voice. Receive the criticism, the feedback and the gentle rebukes.

Second, and hopefully not finally, as the prophetic voices on the wall, we have the honor of sharing God’s hopes and dreams for us. But, we admit that the components that make up our lives—governments, markets, environs, and relationships—will often fall short of God’s ideal for us. That is a message we are privileged to carry, if even for a short time. It lies in the core of our purpose and calling and extends beyond the here, the now, the brick and the mortar.

Don’t Call Me Reverend

It goes without saying that no member of the clergy should ever deliberately take God’s name as their title of office. Over the years, however, a seed thought planted by well-meaning Christians has germinated into the belief that for centuries clerics have done just that. As a result, when some Christians hear a religious leader called “reverend,” they view it as an act of ignorance, or arrogance at the presumption of assuming one of God’s names as a title of church leadership. Believers holding to this teaching categorically reject the idea of calling any church official “reverend.” The basis for that misinformed position is traceable to Psalm 111:9, which declares: “Holy and reverend is his name” (KJV).

A surface reading of the text does appear to suggest “reverend,” like “El Shaddai” or “Jehovah Shalom,” is one of God’s many names. However, upon closer inspection, the text itself casts a very different light upon the meaning behind David’s word choices. Contrary to the misunderstanding embraced by some Christians, the Bible does not suggest “Reverend” as one of the names for God. In fact, the words “holy” and “reverend” are used adjectively in the text. Thus, they describe the nature of God’s name. So

Psalms 111:9 is not a declaration of names for God, but rather expressions of the qualities of God's name. Therefore, a correct reading of the passage could be "the name of God is a holy name," "the name of God is to be revered." So calling a religious leader "reverend" is not problematic because "reverend" is a name for God.

Why then are we correct in not referring to clergy members as "reverend"? By definition, the word "reverend" according to Webster is an adjective meaning "worthy of being revered or entitled to reverence." Let's be honest. This definition presents a new set of problems when we try to apply it to an individual's name. Is any servant of God worthy of being revered or entitled to reverence? Of course not. However, over time, by use and custom, reverend has found acceptance as a noun, and has become the customary title or form of address for clergy in many Christian churches. (See The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, fourth edition [Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000]).

Certainly, respect is due every child of God, even clergy. However, for some men and women in the ranks of the clergy there is no faster means of terminating a conversation than by addressing them as merely "brother" or "sister," rather than by their honorific title "Reverend." Within the fraternity of clergy there are those who view omission of "Reverend" from their title when they are being addressed as insulting and disrespectful. All of which might be somewhat understandable if there happened to be even the slightest biblical support for the practice of using "Reverend." However, such support does not exist in the Bible.

It was not the practice of the early Christian church to refer to church leaders by the title "Reverend." Instead, taking their cues from Scripture, those of the faith employed biblical titles, such as "Elder," "Pastor," "Evangelist," "Deacon." A thorough search of the Scriptures fails to produce even one instance of anyone being called "Reverend."

The honorific title "Reverend" did not surface and gain acceptance as a means of respectful address to members of the clergy class until nearly 1,400 years after Calvary, in the fifteenth century. Then in the seventeenth century "Reverend" became widely used as a prefix before the names of church leaders. During the same century, clergy in the Catholic Church, seeking an expansion of public respect for their positions, helped craft the titles "Very Reverend" for clergy serving as deans of universities and "Right Reverend" for bishops. Meanwhile, archbishops and cardinals became "Most Reverend" (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, (third edition revised)). Does the Bible support the teaching that church leaders may rightly bear titles that seem to suggest their worthiness of reverential treatment? The short answer is no.

There are many reasons for neither using nor accepting the title "Reverend." A few of them are: 1. There is no biblical authority for it. God's Word speaks of prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (see Ephesians 4:11), but never mentions reverends. 2. God alone is entitled to reverence. Revelation 4:11 shares, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power." No matter how good they are, even the best church leaders fall far short of the divine benchmark. Therefore, they are unqualified to be revered. 3. Jesus cautions against assigning religious titles that may cause egos to puff up. "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'. . . do not call anyone on earth your father" (Matthew 23:8, 9). 4. The very real danger of

leaders feeling exalted over those they lead, rather than viewing their roles as that of servant-leaders. Paul counsels in Romans 12:3 “not to think . . . more highly than [one] ought to think.”

Are those who serve the flock of God worthy of respect, courtesy, and perhaps even honor? Absolutely. However, please don't call me “Reverend.” Save your reverence for God. No one else is entitled to receive reverence from humanity. There's no other Reverend in the church.

The End to Prophecy

One of the dreadful side effects of sin was an end to face-to-face dialogue between God and His people (see Isaiah 59:2). However, in spite of sin, God maintained communication with humanity, but used other means to communicate to His people, including sending messages to encourage, correct, or warn using His prophets. So it seems strange that the Bible declares that this will come to an end.

To understand this prospect, we must understand the nature of prophecy and what prophets do.

The Prophet

A prophet “receives communications from God and transmits their intent to His people” (Frank B. Holbrook, “The Biblical Basis for a Modern Prophet”). While the biblical prophet spoke for God, prophets did not prophesy whatever they wanted, “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). These messages from God through His prophets benefited adherents, as was promised: “Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper” (2 Chronicles 20:20).

The Prophetic Gift

In the New Testament the apostle Paul outlines several gifts from the Holy Spirit that were given to the church for its edification. Of the gifts, he preferred love the most, but he also mentioned the gift of prophecy and its importance. Even though prophecy is a spiritual gift to the church, Paul indicated that there will come a day that prophecy will cease. “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away” (1 Corinthians 13:8; see also 1 Corinthians 12:1-4 and Ephesians 4:10-13). Herein lies the conundrum: if prophecy is a gift from God to the church, and it is extremely valuable to God's people, why would it end?

To answer this, we remember that spiritual gifts bring believers into “the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). When Jesus Christ returns to this earth to redeem His people, the need for such prophetic guidance will no longer exist. When God's people reach their heavenly home, prophecies will cease!

Nevertheless, until this glorious day, prophecy is critical to preparing God's people for His soon return.

What to Do With Prophecy Now?

Just as God gave the gift of prophecy to His people to announce His first coming (see Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23), God has given the gift of prophecy in earth's final days to announce His second coming (see Matthew 24).

Among many strong prophetic passages in the Bible announcing the Second Coming, God reveals both warning and great hope to be embraced by His people. For example, John the revelator warned that just prior to Jesus' second coming Satan will wage war against God's remnant people.

"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17). Revelation 19:10 defined the testimony of Jesus as the "spirit of prophecy." Hence, God's remnant people—those who are commandment keepers and have the spirit of prophecy—will be persecuted by Satan, but Revelation 12:11 assures us that they will overcome him "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony"! When God redeems His remnant from this earth, and secures their future for eternity, and all prophecy culminates, when the loud voice from heaven that John heard declaring, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:3, KJV), is sounded across the earth, that is when all prophecy shall cease!

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Feel like your purpose is on hold at work? Hold on, God may want you to be an agent of change.

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PRICELESS!

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45, 46).

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Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45, 46).

You may have seen some of those awesome credit card commercials where the receiver's reaction to that something special is considered to be more "priceless" than anything money can buy. Their memorable slogan, "There are some things money can't buy, but for everything else there is . . ."

One of my favorites includes a toddler who considers a cardboard box more fun to play with than the costly gifts therein. And yet it is from this child's simple but imaginative perspective that I wish to examine the parable Jesus told about the pearl of great price, quoted above in Matthew 13.

Most biblical scholars agree that the essence to understanding this parable is when we seek and find Jesus, that priceless pearl, we realize the Lord is all that we will ever need. While I support that interpretation of the texts by such exegetical scholars, I cannot help feeling there is so much more to this seemingly passing mention.

Taking a page from the world of sales, we find an all-important concept. Sales guru and author Kelley Robertson of the Robertson Training Group states that "the value of a product or service is determined not by the seller but by the buyer."

So it is when it comes to Jesus and our salvation. What does Jesus, the Pearl

of Great Price, really think of us? The writer of Hebrews 12:2 gives us a clue. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Did He not forsake everything that even money couldn't buy to purchase our salvation? Did He not become our Buyer, our Sacrifice, and our Redeemer? And now we in turn have become His own coveted pearl of great price. Are we willing to sell or give up everything we have to possess Jesus and while in so doing experience exactly how He feels and demonstrates His love toward us? When I think of the love of the Father and the ministry of the Son and the Holy Spirit, I must agree: "There are things that money can't buy, but for everything else we have Jesus, and He is simply priceless."

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Day 1 -Read Luke 14:25-30

While reading *Not a Fan*, by Kyle Idleman, I was struck by an observation he made in the preface of his book. He said that whenever Jesus attracted a large crowd, He would find something to say to make them go away. What does this mean personally? How could this have worked evangelistically? Look at some of what He says in some other situations (Mark 5:18-20; 10:21, 22) and share some of your thoughts with us here at *Message* via roundedinstagram Instagram, roundedfacebook Facebook, roundedtwitterbird Twitter, or by #messagemagazine.

Day 2

Sometimes you can be in church and around the things of God so much that you get desensitized to how holy, great, and exceptional He is. He is a radical, nearly unpredictable, spontaneous God who is consistently loving, compassionate, and gracious at the same time. Can you talk about Him? Tell us about the "radical" Jesus you have experienced. Tell us about how He's pushed you to the limit and beyond. Let us know via roundedinstagram Instagram, roundedfacebook Facebook, roundedtwitterbird Twitter, or by #messagemagazine.

Day 3 -Read Matthew 18:18-22

If you would allow me, I would like to push our understanding of what it can cost to follow Jesus. When Jesus asserts that "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (verse 20), do you realize He was telling someone who was looking to join Him that He was homeless? Do you see how He was telling the next person that following Me puts your family affairs on the back burner? Do you see Jesus as One that is ready to turn you away from following rather than fully inviting? Let me ask what He did: are you ready to be homeless for Him? We'd love to hear from you and converse with you concerning these things. Talk to us via roundedinstagram Instagram, roundedfacebook Facebook, roundedtwitterbird Twitter, or by #messagemagazine.

Day 4 -Read Matthew 13:44-46

Just a heads up that I am setting you up for the next portion of the study.

Can you tell us how you searched for the invaluable treasure of Jesus Christ?
Can you list all you "sold" to enter into the kingdom of heaven?

Please tell us via roundedinstagram Instagram, roundedfacebook Facebook, roundedtwitterbird Twitter, or by #messagemagazine.

Day 5 -Read Revelation 3:21

Would you consider this quote?

"There are some who seem to be always seeking for the heavenly pearl. But they do not make an entire surrender of their wrong habits. They do not die to self that Christ may live in them. Therefore they do not find the precious pearl. . . . Almost but not wholly saved means to be not almost but wholly lost" (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 118).

What keeps you from getting the pearl?

Day 6 -Read Zechariah 9:16 and Malachi 3:17

"The parable of the merchantman seeking goodly pearls has a double significance: it applies not only to men as seeking the kingdom of heaven, but to Christ as seeking His lost inheritance. . . . He collected all the riches of the universe, and laid them down in order to buy the pearl. And Jesus, having found it, resets it in His own diadem," (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 118).

Tell us, what comes to mind when you realize that, to God, you are a pearl of great price?

I'll never forget hearing Pastor David Asscherick preach that the kingdom of heaven is not about what you gave up for God but what He gave up for you. In fact, listen yourself. You can listen to it all or skip to minute marker 50:00: http://hopevideo.com/streams/David_Asscherick-Friend_of_God-4-What_Wondrous_Love_is_This.htm

Day 7 -Read Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus came for you and me and did not think His life was too much to pay because we are treasure to Him.

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