

Kingdom Giving
1 Peter 4:7-11 | November 7, 2021
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Today, as we get into God's Word, we're going to talk not wasting the time, energy, and resources that God has given us. We're talking about giving our time, energy, and resources. We talk about this often, because it comes up in God's Word often. But, every year, we take one Sunday in November, and we call it our "Giving Sunday." It's one Sunday where we take look at a text of Scripture that deals with the use of our energy and money and time. Our goal each year is to really see what God can teach us.

For today, we're looking at 1 Peter chapter 4, if you want to go ahead and turn there. I'm going to read, 1 Peter 4:7-11:

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

I consider these words a wake-up call to those of us who are distracted by temporary things at the cost of eternal things. My prayer this morning is that we wake up to the urgency of the need for the Gospel, so much so that we leverage EVERYTHING in our lives for the Kingdom of God. So, today, we see Our Motivation, Instructions, and Ultimate Goal for Leveraging EVERYTHING for the

Kingdom. First, we see our motivation, the greatest incentive for waking up and not wasting any part of our lives.

Our Motivation: The end of all things is at hand (vs. 7a).

Look with me again at the beginning of Verse 7. He says exactly that: “The end of all things is at hand.” These are sobering words, to say the least. What Peter means is that all the major events in God’s plan for redeeming his people have happened, except for one. All except one are in the past when Peter wrote these words. We have Creation, the Fall, Abraham, the Exodus, Israel, the exile to Babylon, Christ’s birth, his death, his resurrection and ascension, and then the Holy Spirit coming into the world and indwelling Christians in Acts chapter 2.

These last few events, specifically Christ’s death and resurrection, those inaugurated the last days. Ever since Christ ascended back into heaven, we’ve been in the last days. What does that mean? It means that everything is ready for Christ to return and for Christ to usher in the Kingdom of God fully. Everything truly is ready for Christ to come back, and because of that, it could happen at any moment. This is why he says, “The end of all things is at hand.”

So, what does that mean for us? What does it mean that Jesus is coming back, and it could be at any moment? Well, it doesn’t mean that we should keep an eye on the sky, constantly looking outside for what’s to come, like maybe some of you do when there’s a tornado watch. I do that too, if I’m honest. But we shouldn’t do that with Christ’s coming. We shouldn’t be obsessed with trying to figure out when Jesus is coming back. Matthew 24:36 tells us that “no one knows the date or the hour.” So what should we do? We should live NOW as if he could come back at any moment, because guess what? He could!

Just think about this for a moment. He could come back today at 2:27pm. He could come back this week, he could come back in 1,000 years. How did this truth affect the mindset of the New Testament writers? The same way it should affect us. We must wake up! We cannot waste a moment that we have on this earth. There is a desperate urgency for living our lives in obedience to God for the glory of God. Not wasting time with being distracted and captivated by the things of this world, but instead leveraging our time and resources to IMPACT the world. Certainly, this includes our money. He's about to bring this up. Do we hold on to our money as if that's where we find our hope and stability? Or are we leveraging it for God's kingdom, because we only have so much time in this life, and we don't know how much longer that is! "The end of all things is at hand."

Martin Luther, one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, he was asked once what he would do if he found out that the end was coming that very day. He responded, this is pretty great: "I'd plant a tree and pay my taxes." I don't know if any of us would respond quite in that way, right? Planting a tree and paying taxes are likely the LAST things most of us would do if we were to find out the end was coming today. But Luther's point was that he was living *every day* of his life in light of the end! He wouldn't suddenly change the way he lived for a day, because he was already living as if Jesus could come back any day.

So the question for us, in light of the end of all things coming at any moment, the question is this: HOW do we leverage everything for the Kingdom, not wasting a moment of time or the tiniest bit of energy or resources we have? How do we leverage everything for the kingdom? Well, Peter gives us a strategy in these verses. What does he say? He says, first:

Our Strategy: (vv. 7b-11a)

A. Keep a clear head (vs. 7b).

Because the end of all things is at hand, he says “be self-controlled and sober-minded.” These two words mean basically the same thing. Self-controlled means having the right state of mind. It means seeing things clearly! Then, sober-minded means being clear-headed. So the way I like to summarize these two together is simply by saying, “Keep a clear head.” That’s the first “how” of leveraging everything for the kingdom. We keep a clear head, meaning we have in mind the reality of our situation. What is that reality? That life is short, and that the end of all things is at hand! Truly realizing and believing that will affect the way we live our lives.

But what happens so easily is we get distracted by the things of the world. The very world that we are to be distinct from, the very world that we’re to reach with the Gospel, is the world that so captivates us—that takes our attention away from Christ. In a world that is fallen, we struggle even to *think* sanely, because truth evades us sometimes. How can we be sober-minded and clear-headed in this world?

A simple answer, one that we talk about often, is the Word of God. This urgency that comes with realizing that the end of all things is at hand brings us to a desperate need for truth that can be trusted, truth that we KNOW is truth. We have it right here. Without being clear-headed, sober-minded, having a worldview molded by the Word of God, we will never live with urgency. We will never live like God intends us to live. Instead, we will grow comfortable in our earthly bodies, and in our worldly cultures, all the while missing out on our true identities as sojourners, as exiles, as people who are not yet in their true home.

Even our prayers will reflect our worldly minds instead of the mind of God. And this is exactly why Peter brings up our prayers. Vs. 7: “Be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.” This sober mindedness allows us to pray within reality, pray having in mind what is actually going on, not from man’s perspective, but from God’s! Having a clear head means seeing and valuing God’s purposes in the world above anything else. Without that clear head, we won’t pray, or at least we won’t pray with God’s goals in mind. So, keep a clear head, for the sake of your prayers. The second part of the strategy:

B. Love each other deeply (vs. 8).

How do we leverage everything, especially our time and energy and resources, for the Kingdom of God? We love each other deeply. Verse 8- “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”

One of the most central tenets of the Christian faith is that we are people of love who serve a God of love. Think of the Greatest Commandments that Jesus gave when he was asked, “What are the most important parts of the Law?” He said, “Love God with everything, and love each other as yourself.” This is a deep, earnest, meaningful, continuous love. Not a pretend love! Not a façade. But a true, deep love. And this love covers a multitude of sins.

If we think for a moment about the urgency of the times and what it has to do with love, listen: we don’t have time for grudges. We don’t have time for holding things against each other. We only have so much time to build each other up in love and challenge each other to follow Christ more and more. We cannot let ANYTHING get in the way of our earnest and deep love for one another.

In our Foster Care Training in Kansas City, our trainer explained the unusually strong bond between siblings even when couldn't be more different from each other. Siblings in neglectful or abusive situations are often so close because they've been through the same trauma. These siblings are drawn so strongly together because they've gone through the same thing. As Christians, we've been through a far more impactful event than any of the best or worst experiences a human can go through.

We were estranged from God because of our rebellion. We were the objects of God's wrath, having dramatically sinned against him. And yet, even with our rebellion, God loved us. He loved us enough to send his son Jesus to die on the cross bearing our sin and our rebellion, taking our place on that Cross, and then rising again from the dead three days later. For those of us who have turned from our sin and believed in Jesus Christ, we've been through something that so marginalizes our differences that it's, in some ways, as if they're not even there. We love each other because Christ first loved us. We love each other despite our faults, because Christ first loved us despite our faults.

Don't let petty things keep you from loving the other people in this room. We don't have time to mess with grudges or even personality clashes. We don't all have to be best friends, but the love of God for us compels us to love each other. The third answer to the question, HOW do we leverage everything for the Kingdom?

C. Leverage your possessions and finances (vs. 9).

Verse 9: "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." Now what Peter is referencing here was particularly helpful back in the 1st century, because travelling was not common, and it was also incredibly expensive. So, particularly for the spreading of the Gospel to different areas, hospitality was incredibly important for

Christians. They needed places to stay when they were visiting different cities and regions. They didn't have Holiday Inn Express back then. Without hospitality from fellow Christians, this Gospel work really couldn't happen. This wasn't only true for Christians who were travelling, but even for many of the main gatherings to happen in their own cities, guess what? People had to be hospitable and open up their homes! They didn't have church buildings in the first century, so they met in people's homes.

Having in mind that the end is coming, that Christ is coming back, please hear me: we must leverage what God has given us for His Kingdom! This includes our own homes, and all other material possessions we have. Ask yourself the question: how can I leverage what God has given me? Or better yet, since we are merely stewards or "managers" of God's stuff, maybe the better way to ask is this: How can I leverage what God has let me borrow, for His kingdom? It could be as simple as having people over and investing into people's lives in that way—or as complex as opening up your home to orphans through adoption or foster care. Or, even more specifically, your money! How can you best leverage the money God has given you for His Kingdom? Because, yet again, we don't have much time! I know 80-90 years feels like a long time, but it's not! Not to mention there is no guarantee that we have that long!

Even with this Body, Lamar, as a whole-- we want to make use of the physical things that God has given us. Our facilities here are used for Sunday morning Bible Studies and worship in three languages. We're kicking off Wednesday nights again in January, which we're very excited about. But even beyond that, we use these facilities for God's Kingdom broadly. We have Bible Study Fellowship every Wednesday where hundreds of women come and study the Word of God together.

We host Global Church on Sunday afternoons, a Korean congregation. In the past we've hosted an Iranian church, a Thai church, a Kachin church (that's a state within Burma). A Chinese church. Bible studies and small groups of all kinds of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Why in the world do we do this, even with all the logistics involved? Because we want to use what God has given for His Kingdom! Let me just tell you: if there is availability, we basically don't say no—as long as it's a solid group or church.

We also have in mind to leverage our yearly budget as effectively as possible for the Kingdom. That's part of why we added these offering spotlights in the bulletin not too long ago—because we want to see and know what the general budget goes toward. If I'm honest with all of you, I hope and pray that one day, every single covenant member of this church would be a tither. Meaning they give at least 10% of their income to the ministry of God's church.

Not only because that honors a biblical principle that God used to provide for the ministry of His people, but also because I want you to know it's worth it! Consistently giving to the ministry of God's church is giving to the only organization that literally cannot fail. Sure, individual churches may shut their doors, but God's church universal cannot fail. Matt. 16:18- "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!" That's Jesus!

So yes, it is part of our covenant as a church that we support the ministry of the Body of Christ. I know sometimes money is tight. But let me just tell you: God blesses obedience. He absolutely does. That doesn't mean God will give you more money if you tithe. That's not what I'm saying. But I am saying: God blesses obedience. Period. God will provide what you need. Period. It may not be what you think you need. But He will absolutely provide what He knows you need. I've never heard of anyone who gave too much to God who then ran out and couldn't provide for themselves. Because it doesn't happen.

Let me just tell you: what you do with your money... and not just the 10% but all 100% of it. What you do with your money can be described as one of two things, and that's it. It's either worship or idolatry! Do you worship God in what you do with your money? Or has money become an idol? Those are the only two options!

There's a reason Jesus spoke more about money than he did prayer, marriage, sex, worship. He spoke more about money than all those things, why?! One of my favorite authors put it this way. Because "Money is a universal crisis of faith every single day." The question is, do you trust God with your very livelihood, or do you trust in yourself? Hebrews 13:5 says, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, why? Because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"

We want to leverage EVERYTHING for the Kingdom of God. And why are we, and God's children, particularly able to do so? How is it that we can be more sacrificial and generous than anyone else on earth?! Because God is with us! And we're to do this gladly! That's why verse 9 tells us to show hospitality without grumbling!

Why would we grumble in the first place? Well, let's be honest. It's hard to sacrifice possessions. It's hard to commit to giving God 10% or more no matter what. It's hard to open up our homes to foster children or just neighbors, being nice to them and having them over for dinner! It's inconvenient to have to clean up. For some, maybe that's the only time you do clean up your house. No shame! It's hard to sacrifice money, especially if we have to give up some modern comfort. But yet again, the point comes up. The driving incentive behind all of this: the end of all things is at hand. We do not have the time to just sit around and be comfortable. No! God help us if we're sitting around comfortably and coasting our way into retirement and then into heaven without sacrificing for the Kingdom of God! We

must leverage our possessions and finances. Lastly, how do we leverage everything for the Kingdom?

D. Use God's gifts to serve (vs. 10-11a).

Verses 10-11: As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies..."

We see implied here that every Christian has a spiritual gift of some type that God wants them to use to serve the Body. In fact, part of being good stewards of God's grace is making sure that we DO use these gifts to serve one another. Being a steward means that we're managing or administering our gift. And Peter here puts the gifts under two different categories: speaking gifts and serving gifts. All the speaking gifts, like teaching and prophecy, are to be done as if speaking the very words of God. And those with gifts of serving, like hospitality or mercy, the very strength by which we serve with those gifts is the strength God supplies.

In other words, God supplies both. He supplies the truth that we teach. And he supplies the strength we need to serve. And this points us to the ultimate goal in all of this. Why are we doing all this? Why leverage everything for God's Kingdom. Every part of our lives. Why?

Our Ultimate Goal: the glory of God in everything (vs. 11b).

Look at the second half of verse 11. What is our ultimate goal in all of this? "that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

This is basically a mini doxology of sorts. A doxology is just a formal praise of God. “To him belong glory and dominion (which means power and might, like ruling power), it all belongs to him forever and ever. Amen.”

Keeping his unmatched glory and worth at the forefront of our minds is what it means to be sober-minded, clear headed. You remember that from earlier? Being captivated by his majesty and the inexplicable love He has for us tiny human beings. That is the very fuel and supply we have for loving one another. Seeing how much bigger he is than anything else the world has to offer will help us to see our material possessions in true light. It will help us see just how small and insignificant our comfort really is. God is bigger than we can possibly imagine, and living in obedience to him, leveraging every moment and every resource we have for his glory, is the greatest purpose for which we can live.

There’s no greater joy than glorifying God with our lives, pointing to his holiness, his majesty, his splendor, power, greatness, and his infinite worth. As a church, we don’t want to build a Lamar kingdom or a Pastor Ryan kingdom or any other kingdom; we desire to build God’s Kingdom. I have to ask you: are you building upon God’s Kingdom? Are you living with the urgency of the apostles? If not, ask God to wake you up. Ask God to help stop wasting your time, and your energy, and your resources—no matter how big or small. Ask God to use you for His work, in His Kingdom.



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