

Common Grace For the Common Good

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[0 : 00] Last Sunday, we were almost a million miles away from Washington, D.C. At least it seemed that way. We were on a little island called Bowen Island off of the coast of Vancouver in the British Columbia part of North America.

If you know that part of the world, it's the only place in North America where the ocean actually meets the mountains. It's a glorious place to see and to hear and to smell when the sun is shining, which it isn't always, of course.

But I was preaching in a little chapel, a chapel on the side of a mountain with islanders and mainlanders together reflecting on lamentation, longing, and the promise of Pentecost.

So we're back in Washington, D.C., where we lived for 30 years, the city known the world over for its monumental glories and its social shames. As you all know, it's a city full of wonders and of wounds, like every city and every society in every century.

I've called this common grace for the common good. Let's pray together. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we give ourselves to you to worship you, to listen to you, to learn from you, to offer ourselves, heart and mind, soul and strength to you.

[1 : 23] In Jesus' name, amen. Words, words, and more words. As one observer of the 20th century recently noted, through mobile phones, the Internet, electronic mail, television, radio, newspapers, books, etc., people receive about 105,000 words or 23 words per second in just half a day.

Although people cannot really read 105,000 words each day, this is the real number estimated to be reaching the human eyes and ears every day. After adding pictures, videos, games, etc., we reach the volume of 34 gigabytes of information per day on average.

If it feels overwhelming, it is overwhelming. And what do we need to do with all that we see and hear, word after word after word? In the years I taught on Capitol Hill, James Billington was the librarian of Congress in those years.

And one day in the Sunday paper of the Washington Post, there was a top-of-the-fold interview with Billington, and it was called The Info Glut Culture, blaring across the page. And essentially, Billington was saying that we get thousands and thousands and thousands of books into our library week after week, year after year.

And of course, that's only increased as the weeks have gone by since he did this interview. But this question, which I've never forgotten, was this. What are we going to do with all this information? Will we become a wiser people knowing all that we know, hearing all that we have heard?

[2 : 58] If it feels overwhelming, it is overwhelming. But sometimes, sometimes, words are well chosen. They're artfully, insightfully giving us windows into the truth about life and the world, about the truth about who we are as sons of Adam and daughters of Eve.

John Le Carre was a writer that I've read most of his work. Maybe you know his work as well. A British spy, many years ago, wrote a novel called The Spy Who Came In From the Cold, which kind of threw him into a pantheon of globally listened-to writers.

Began to write and write about the Cold War until there wasn't a Cold War any longer, and then finally began to write about this globalizing, politicizing world which is ours today. And it seems that I read his work, whether it's The Constant Guard, which became a film along the way, or you can kind of make your choices of his work.

It feels to me like his novels are about what I see in the front page of the newspapers as I watch them day by day. It's like I live in the world that John Le Carre writes about.

The hard part of Le Carre's work, in my mind, is this. He masterfully understands his world. He captures his world. He understands the political economy, the way peoples are, nations are, how

we relate to each other, what places are.

[4 : 18] He gets all that masterfully. And the end of every story, though, is this. We ought to all choose to be cynics. Because, of course, at the end of the day, somebody's going to get shot in the back.

Somebody's going to get their life ruined. Somebody's going to lose everything. And so prepare yourself to be a cynic one more time. One more time. It's hard.

They're hard to read, except, of course, he's a brilliant writer. And it's humbling to realize that he understands our world so well. So very, very well.

He put it this way in a recent novel called *Absolute Friends*. It says that we are people with a desperate appeal for a glimmer of hope in a world that has collapsed around his ears.

Hear these words again. A desperate appeal for a glimmer of hope in a world that has collapsed around his ears. More despairing than maybe we wanted on a Sunday evening.

[5 : 20] Perhaps then it's also true that each one of us has come into this building, into this place tonight. Among these people, having lived for the last six days in a very wounded, bent, and bruised world.

From global terrors to national griefs to the very personal hurts and sorrows that are ours. We all long for glimmers of hope, don't we? We all know that we are broken and that we live in a broken world.

How do we make sense of life, though? How do we make sense of this life? Of this world? Of the world which we call our world? Especially the fallen world, the bruised and the wounded world that it is.

I don't know of any question that's harder in my own living life as I do day by day. Looking at the brokenness and the hurt and the wound of the world, what am I going to do without it? How am I going to respond to it?

How will I sing, holy, holy, holy, God? How will I somehow confess that I don't want to stumble over the same earthly, heavenly realities that Nicodemus did?

[6 : 26] It makes sense of who I am and what I'm to do in the world. How am I going to hold what I believe about God and myself together in a coherent way? Well, we confess week by week, don't we?

Liturgically remembering our deepest commitments. We most believe to be true about who God is, who we are, what the world is like. We say, we believe. I believe.

People of Christ have been doing this for thousands of years. I believe in God. I believe that he is the maker of heaven and earth. And these are the confessions of our faith.

But you see, even these words are weighted words because they are formed by a deeper belief about the way the world is, about what it's possible to know about the world. If we were in another setting, perhaps we might more easily use the language of meta-narrative.

But you see, the argument we make as a people of God is that we've been given a story to understand our own stories within. A meta-narrative for all the narratives which make up who we are in this assembly tonight.

[7 : 30] But you see, it's an argument, a thesis, a conviction, a belief that in fact there is a story that makes sense of all the stories. What world do we live in anyway?

What do our lives mean anyway? How ought we to live? How is it possible to live a good life? A morally meaningful life. The writers along the way that I've been listening to, St. Alistair McIntyre, who wrote a book called *After Virtue* some years ago.

I spent most of a month of my life reading it very carefully. But he has this simple sentence along the way. I can only ask the question, what am I to do? If I've asked the prior question, of what story or stories do I find myself apart?

Hear him say this again. I can only ask the question, what am I to do? If I've asked the prior question, of what story or stories do I find myself apart?

Well, I want to look tonight with you at a few ideas, bigger ideas. And I've placed them under these categories. The Bible as a completely unique book. The Bible as a completely unique book.

[8 : 36] And then secondly, looking at what I've simply called common grace for the common good. And then finally, expectation affects program. Expectation affects program.

So the Bible, a completely unique book. Words, words, and more words one more time. In the scriptures, there's a grand drama being set forth for us.

A story which claims to make sense of all the stories. Probably almost 30 years ago, I was teaching on Capitol Hill. And I had opportunity to invite a man named Leslie Newbigin to come to Washington, D.C. to speak.

He was in his 80s at the time and wasn't going to make many more trips to any parts of the world. He was British. Had lived 40 years in India. He'd written a number of books. His most recent book was sent to me by the Anglican Bishop of Pittsburgh at the time.

And we had been conspiring together to think about these questions of theology and culture and life in the world together. And I got the book called *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. And it was exciting to me to read this book.

[9 : 42] This great, great question he was raising. In a pluralizing world, can we still speak any longer about a gospel which claims to be true? Is that a possibility? And you realize, living in the world that we do, in the city in which we live, that's a huge question for us.

In a pluralist society, does it make sense to believe the Bible is true, true like that, for everyone everywhere? Well, we had a lunch on Capitol Hill with him, some of my friends who were reading the book together.

They were in think tanks and the State Department and the Justice Department and the Senate and the Supreme Court, all reading this book together, trying to make sense of our own vocations in the city of Washington.

And along the way, we were asking questions, and he asked lots of questions to us. But I had a question for him, which I asked after the lunch that day. And I said to him, who was your Hindu friend, the Hindu scholar that you write about?

If you know the book at all, maybe you know the story he tells of this Hindu scholar who said to him at one point, I don't know why when Christian missionaries brought us this holy book, your Bible, your holy book, that they said to us, add this to your supply, read this one too, as if somehow it was just one more book to read.

[10 : 59] And the Hindu scholar said to Newbigin, I've now read this book from beginning to end. And you need to know that I think of it as a completely unique book, actually.

There's no book like it I've ever, ever read. It's a book which claims to make sense of, because it does make sense of all of history from beginning to end. And it makes sense of who we are as human beings, as responsible actors in history.

And of course, the two go together, the view of history and the view of the human condition. They go together because they define each other. They shape each other. A completely unique book, unique in its understanding of history and of the human condition.

I've often wondered, actually, being in rooms where Christian people have gathered, thinking about these questions as I do week after week, what would it be like just to walk along the pews, along the seats we have together, and ask the question, well, how do you read the Bible?

Do you see it as a completely unique book? Because you need to remember, of course, as we must tonight, that the Hindu scholar is a scholar of the Hindu tradition, the Hindu way of making sense of life in the world.

[12 : 08] And the Hindu religion, Hindu worldview, of course, there are many, many ways to go, because there are many gods. There are many, many ways to make sense of life, and we all are finding our way, finally, to a full and complete enlightenment along the way.

Someday, someday, that's our great, great hope as Hindus. So for the Hindu to say, in fact, this is not like any other book. It's a completely unique book. I found those words chilling, actually.

Would we see what the Hindu scholars saw? Would we see it as a completely unique book? Well, this Bible, as we call it, offers us a story from beginning to end.

It is the history of redemption unfolded, book by book, telling the story of the beginning of beginnings, the skewing of human souls and all of life, the disorienting and disordering of who we are and why we are, with the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent in deepening conflict throughout history.

Coming to the end of the end, of course, which in reality is the end of a new beginning, the very end of the story. Story by story is what the Hindu scholars saw, a completely unique book, making sense of all of history and of the human being as a responsible actor in history.

[13 : 24] There's no other book like it. But come with me for a moment back into this story and dwell with me for a few moments in the prophet Zechariah as we've come to see him in history.

His own vocation, of course, was to speak the word of the Lord in the last years of Daniel's life in the reign of Darius. Chapter by chapter, it's a story of the great mercy of God, the waywardness of the human heart.

And threaded through from beginning to end is the promise that it will not always be this way, that someday when the day of the Lord comes, all will be made well.

Everything and everyone will be well. If chapter 1 has the words, come home, come home, don't be like your fathers. Chapter 2 puts it this way, be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for he has roused himself from his holy hill.

It's a reminder that some of our best songs, of course, some of our most important songs are Christmas carols, let all mortal flesh be silent. Chapter 3, in that day, declares the Lord of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbors to come under his vine and under his fig tree.

[14:40] It's a remarkable vision of hospitality, if you remember Abraham and the Trinity in our earlier picture on the screen. Chapter 4, these seven lamps are the eyes of the Lord, which reigns through the whole earth.

There are more visions, of course, enough of flying scrolls, women in baskets, four chariots. In chapter 7, it comes like this, in the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev.

Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another. Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor. Let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.

As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I will not hear, says the Lord of hosts. The next chapters are full of promises of peace and prosperity to Zion, with wonderful perennial images that bring smiles to human hearts in every century, every culture, every city.

Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, and the streets shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets, and it shall be marvelous in my sight.

[15:54] This deep longing is satisfied, is brought about by the king who comes, quote, humbled and mounted on a donkey, who shall speak peace to the nations.

His rule shall be from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth. And then someday, someday the house of Judah will be restored, because the Lord cares for his flock, because God remembers, Yahweh remembers, says Zechariah, who says to the people of Israel, I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy.

So when they look on me, whom they've pierced, they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child. And finally, the prophecy comes to an end, what we call the 14th chapter.

Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, who will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one, and his name one. On that day, there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, holy to the Lord.

And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as bowls before the altar, and every pot in Jerusalem, and Judah shall be called holy to the Lord of hosts. John Calvin, the theologian, pastor, attorney, of 400 years ago, writing in Geneva, Switzerland, put it this way.

[17:19] We now see that when Zechariah meant was this, that God would so claim the whole world as his own, as to consecrate people and all their possessions wholly to his own service.

So there'd be no longer any uncleanness, that whether they ate or drank or engaged in war, or undertook any other work, all things would be pure and holy, for God would always be before their eyes.

Well, yes, for Zechariah, for the people of the day, there was muck, and there was a lot of mess to history. The pots, as they were, were both full of wonder and horror, the stables of glory and of stench.

And we are called to remember to remember, as Zechariah did for himself, people of Israel, that what is, is not what someday will be. Like the Hindu scholar, if we have eyes to see, if we read the Bible, paying attention to what God is saying to history and to us, then we begin to make sense of who we are and why we are, and what the world is about and what we are to be about.

Well, the question of today is this, what am I going to do with the world? We have to find a way to see more seamlessly, to understand our life and world more coherently.

[18:39] Again, coming back to Nicodemus and Jesus, as they talked late one night, the debate comes over, how do you, can understand earthly things if you can't understand heavenly things, and heavenly if not earthly, and you can see that for Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel as he was, he stumbled over trying to make sense of his own place in the world, in the world in which he lived.

I think that's a question for all of us, actually. It's a very difficult question for all of us. I have for years now resided within this simple phrase, which comes to mean a lot to me, common grace for the common good.

Why those words, though? What do they mean? Common grace for the common good. Because of what I do with my life, I've been doing for most of my life, I've spent hours and hours and hours at the coffee tables of the world, the little coffee shops of this city and other cities, often responding to questions like, what about me, 25-year-old that I am?

What about me, a 32-year-old that I am? What about me, a 46-year-old that I am? What about me, what about me? How do I make sense of my life? What am I supposed to do with my life?

In different ways, of course, there are always questions about the meaning of vocation, which is a good word, even if it's a complex word. But there are always questions about the possibility of a coherent life.

[20 : 06] In very different ways, we stumble over our lives, we stumble over our world, more often than not, settling for some kind of dualism, for compartmentalizing what we believe about the world from the way we live in the world.

Psychologically, we do so. Politically, we do so. Sexually, economically, at work and at play, not sure how to see everything as holy to the Lord.

common grace is simply ordinary grace. Ordinary grace, the stuff of life. The stuff of your life, of my life, if we have eyes to see it as it is.

Common grace, of course, is not saving grace, and the best theology makes that distinction. God's work is saving grace. But you see, if the only way we have to make sense of life is that these things are God's, these things are heavenly, these things are earthly, well, you see, it's got to either be sacred or it's going to be secular.

If we can only do that with our lives in the world, we stumble over our lives in the world. And the church has been plagued by that debilitating dualism with many faces over its many years.

[21 : 18] In the best tradition, though, as the church in the world, we're called to live most of life in ordinary time. Ordinary time, which is most of the time. rhythmically making our way through the year, lingering over the days and seasons of Advent, of Christmas, of Epiphany, of Lent, of Easter, of Pentecost, day by day remembering to remember that all of life is holy to the Lord.

Day by day remembering that everything, everything, every square inch of the whole of reality belongs to Jesus who alone is Lord. Even as we are being formed in mind and heart to live most of our days in the ordinary world of ordinary time.

There are many ordinary graces in this fallen world and when we offer them in and through our lives, our varied and various locations, our cities and our societies flourish.

The smile of a baby, the laughter of children, the beauty of cherry blossoms and of autumn leaves, the hugs and kisses of holy love, a wonderfully imagined house full of well-loved furniture, good and just laws that honor one another, and cooking pots too, of course, cooking pots too, ready to serve others as, to serve us as we serve others, full of mouth-watering smells that finally satisfy our stomachs with taste that God alone could imagine.

We could, of course, if we were prone to do so and had bank accounts that allowed it, go to the local Williams and Sonoma store and spend \$800 on a fire engine red cooking pot. We could do that, couldn't we?

[22 : 56] We could also go to Home Depot and find a \$37.99 aluminum cooking pot and do much the same kind of thing. But maybe you're like me and you've eaten dinner, eaten supper around a small little place in western Kenya in a small village where, in fact, they've taken dirt from the ground, clay from the ground, they've wetted it, they've fired it, they've built their own clay pot and they've put their chicken and onions inside the pot and they've, of course, longed for food for one more day and they've been satisfied that day.

You see, every house on the face of the earth, whether it's a high-rise condo looking out of the city of Washington or Vancouver, whether it's a humble little hut in the western villages of Kenya, every, every, every home has a cooking pot.

So for me, it's remarkable that, in fact, in God's own surprising gift to us, he would say, when the day of the Lord comes, it's the cooking pots that would be called holy to the Lord.

So very ordinary, so very common, yet if we have eyes to see, it is a common grace, isn't it? It's a gift for us living our lives in the world.

This is why I've loved my friend Hans and his hamburgers. Maybe you've eaten an Elevation burger along the way in your life in Washington, but Hans has become a friend in his years here and he first just put up a little store in Falls Church, Virginia on Lee Highway and I entered into his life early on in that period and I began to have conversation with him about who he was and why he was making hamburgers that tasted so good and french fries that actually were pretty good.

[24 : 37] You fried them where? You fried them in what? In olive oil? Well, why olive oil? Because you see, our stomachs take olive oil in better than other kinds of oil. And what are these hamburgers made from?

From cows that you carefully picked out because they were naturally fed and they were organically produced and what is it about these? And I began to realize that some years ago I was no longer 18 years old and I couldn't eat a Five Guys hamburger or a McDonald's Big Mac at 11 o'clock at night and sleep for the rest and I would be sick to my stomach actually for hours to come.

And I began to think though, but what is it about your food, Hans, that allows me to go back to work at 1 p.m. in the afternoon having had lunch with you and I don't even think about it because my stomach somehow takes in what you've made and I think, well, who are you, Hans, and why do you make hamburgers like this?

Tommy Hinson, your rector here, is a good friend to me and he went to a good seminary. We had some of his seminary students, not his, but the seminary students come to spend a week with us a few years ago wanting to think about vocations in the city of Washington.

We took them to the hill and to downtown and to this and to this and had lunch with Hans and his hamburgers one day. They wondered why Hans didn't have signs in the store saying these are John 3.16 hamburgers.

[25 : 56] And you think, you really asked that question? You wanted there to be some kind of sign in the store saying, of course I'm a Christian, I make Christian hamburgers, holy hamburgers, of course they will be there.

They asked that question to you, Hans? Well, they did and I still groan over that actually. Hans has this sign instead when you walk into the store, burgers the way they're meant to be.

Burgers the way they're meant to be. You see, like with Jesus who tells a little story about a man who has seed and sows it and some comes up and some doesn't and he says, if you have ears to hear, then hear.

Hans was essentially saying, if you have a tongue to taste, then taste. And come in and taste my hamburgers and my fries and then if you have a question, you can ask more about why are they and what do you mean a hamburger the way it's meant to be.

I've teased him over the years of creating eschatological hamburgers and eschatology is the part of theology that speaks about the last things, the very end things and end of time.

[26 : 56] I can't promise Hans that his hamburgers will be on that marriage supper of the lamb long, long table. But what I am sure of is that everything on the table will be healthy and tasty at the very same time.

There'll be no trade-offs of course. There won't be a donut end and an apple end. It'll all be wonderfully healthy, wonderfully tasty together. And so for Hans to do his best now to create healthy, tasty food, you see it's a signpost of a world that someday is going to be.

Someday will be. They're eschatological hamburgers, hamburgers the way they're meant to be. A year ago the magazine Men's Health after doing what they called the burger chain smackdown starting with all the big chains in America, all of them down to this and then this and then this and finally who won at the end of the day last spring 2017 Elevation Burger 1.

Healthy and tasty together, you see, a little bit of earth, a little bit of heaven somehow there together for us to not get sick to our stomachs over but to say, well thanks be to God for a good meal with you today, Hans.

You see, common grace for the common good is ordinary life for ordinary people. It's always though in the language which comes to us from Jeremiah the prophet, seek the flourishing of your city, to plant trees, to build houses, to get married, to have children.

[28 : 19] Do good work born of a love for God and for his world right in the midst of Babylon, right in the midst of Babylon. I know that living in other places in America and living in Canada now, not living in Washington D.C.

all the time as I did for so long. People see Washington D.C. differently who don't live inside the city. Sometimes it's respect still, sometimes it's really, what? But the idea of praying for this flourishing of Babylon, it's almost like praying for the flourishing of Washington, isn't it? You think, well why would I pray for Washington to flourish? How is this word a word for me? Unless Washington flourishes, you won't flourish? Unless Babylon flourishes, you won't flourish? These are difficult, historical, complex questions.

It's quite a prayer actually that Jeremiah gave to Daniel, to Meshach, to Shadrach, and to Abednego. Seek the flourishing of your city. Common grace for the common good. Build houses, plant trees.

These aren't saving graces, they're ordinary graces. I would say that we need words like this though to make sense of our lives. We need a theology deep enough and true enough to make sense of our world.

[29 : 32] We need to see scripture in ways that can make sense of history and of the human condition. Common grace for the common good gives me a place to stand, gives me a way to keep my heart from the temptation to call some things sacred and some things secular, to see some things in life as holy and other things as not.

my grandfather bought and sold cattle in Colorado and even though I grew up in California, most summers I spent some weeks with my grandparents and one summer at age 10 I was with him in Cortez, Colorado, the very southwestern corner of Colorado and he was buying cattle that day and one of the buyers among many, many buyers from around Colorado, from New Mexico, from Albuquerque and Denver and other places and he was known to his colleagues and to the auctioneer and the auctioneer stopped his auctioneer call in the middle of his work that day and said to my grandfather sitting out with other buyers saying, Mr. Gilchrist, what are these cattle selling for this week?

And I was 10 and so I didn't understand all of it but what I do remember looking back even in that age 10 year of my life that the auctioneer knew that my grandfather would know the price even if nobody else did but he'd also be honest about the price and he trusted him to be honest about the price and to know the price and you think about the markets and marketplaces of the world and how much actually is dependent upon the common grace of knowing what you're supposed to know and being honest about it to the watching world I knew though from my grandfather that good as he was at what he did that night by night he would lead my grandmother my parents my aunts and uncles and cousins and me night by night gathering together after supper with worship together as a family on our knees and he would pray and pray for God's work in the world and some of the words of his prayer still ring their way through my mind most of my life to get later Saint Benedict called this *Ora e Labora* when he called people to follow him and to take up a common life together as Roman civilization was crumbling and falling apart *Ora e Labora* to pray and to work together not to somehow choose one life against another life the prayers over here the workers over here but how would you have a coherent life a more seamless life where praying and work were held together for Benedict for my grandfather I've learned from both of course well for gardeners for mechanics for butchers and bakers for carpenters and professors for librarians and nurses for painters and philosophers for dentists and doctors for accountants and lawyers janitors and business executives architects and artists journalists and farmers economists and politicians everyone everywhere in and through who we are in and through what we do the call is to see seamlessly to see sacramentally

I would say where heaven and earth meet where the truths of heaven meet the reality of earth where what God cares about is what we care about what God loves is what we love burgers the way they're meant to be the way they ought to be the way they someday will be loves and longings hopes and dreams friendships and families everything even cooking pots and especially hamburgers and yet and yet it's not that way is it it's not that way and all day long it isn't that way and I said earlier on this evening we've all come from a world where it's just not that way hear again these words of John Le Carre a desperate appeal for a glimmer of hope in a world that's collapsed around his ears we know it's true that we live and move and have our being in a badly broken world what do we do with the great question of the day and of our lives can we know this world and still love this world living in the now but not yet of history our common vocation is to give ourselves to untwisting the twistedness of life and by the mercy of God being common grace for the common good we spend ourselves twining together heaven and earth being and becoming signposts of the

coherent cosmos that God has made and that we are to steward do you know these words [34 : 12] I hope you do Gandalf I thought you were dead but then I thought that I was dead myself is everything sad going to come untrue what's happened to the world a great shadow has departed said Gandalf and then he laughed and the sound was like music or like water in a parched land and as he listened the thought came to Sam that he had not heard laughter the pure sound of merriment for days upon days without count of course these are the words of Tolkien from the Lord of the Rings is everything sad going to come untrue everything sad going to come untrue I have for much of my life thought about this phrase expectation affects program expectation affects program what we believe to be true about the end of history affects the way that we live our lives day by day I dropped out of college about age 20 for a couple of years and lived in a couple of communes one in the

Bay of California one in Europe and hitchhiked a lot and asked a lot of questions and ended up in Phoenix Arizona for a while with an Indian philosopher with a great Indian name Surrendra Gangadine and he took me into his own council and his own studies and his thinking for a summer and I asked question upon question upon question one of his gifts to me that summer were these words expectation affects program and of course it's true of Hindus expectation affects program it's true of Muslims it's true of Jews it's true of evolutionary materialists it's true of hedonists it's true of Christians of course that our expectation about the future shapes our lives in the here and now well expectation affects program so the day of the Lord and cooking pots have something to say to us a last word brothers and sisters and it's a prayer from generations ago from centuries ago echoing across time in this city and this place in it we hear that other men and women have had the same questions that we do have longed just as we do wanting in their hearts to see seamlessly to see all of life as holy to the

Lord even as we make peace with the proximate character of love the proximate reality of our best efforts at work the proximate nature of political life and on and on with every son of Adam and daughter of Eve we yearn for the day when everything that is sad will come untrue well pray with me as I pray with the church over the centuries these words first given to God in prayer in Geneva Switzerland 400 years ago grant almighty God as you have deigned to choose us choose us as your peculiar treasure and to consecrate us to yourself in the person of your only begotten son oh grant that we may so follow holiness through the whole course of our life that thy glory may shine forth in all our works that we may never undertake anything except for this end that thy name may be ever more and more glorified we may be holy both in body and soul and free from all the pollutions of the flesh and of the world that we may be thus confirmed in the hope of our calling and be encouraged to proceed during the remainder of our course till we at length shall reach that glory which has been procured for us by the blood of your only begotten son amen yes that thy glory may shine forth in all our works even and especially in our cooking pots our ordinary lives and labors and loves common grace for the common good as they are amen and amen