

What is it I'm here for? I ask myself that as the last lady files out after our Thursday Bible study. Time to check the old to-do list. Sermon practiced for Sunday, check, website updated, check, weekly email written, check. I guess there's no more procrastinating, time to start on the sermon.

Pull out the worship plan, remind myself what text I chose to preach on, re-read the as we gather so I can start getting the juices flowing. Pull up my Bible study software to read the text. If I'm lucky, one of my seminary professors put up a video with some insights into the Bible passage. But no such luck, they haven't gotten around to the Epistles yet. Search through my library for a helpful book. Take notes. Get ideas. Go home in time for dinner.

Put it on the back burner over the weekend, let it simmer in the recesses of my mind. Sunday comes, enjoy the Lord's day with God's family. Teach a Bible class. When the last person leaves and the door clicks shut, eat lunch, make my phone calls, re-arrange my stacks of papers, and time to make an outline so the fine people in the pews can have something off of which to take notes.

All this preparation. All these words. Prayer, meditation, and reading. What is it I'm here for? Monday morning arrives and I'm staring at a blank Word document. A draft. A sermon that is yet unborn, unwritten, unpreached. Let's get some ink to paper. Better to have something than nothing. Let's start with an introduction. That housekeeping at the beginning is like the free space on the bingo card.

Welcome! We're continuing our sermon series on 2 Timothy. We're on week three of four. Each week we're circling around the theme draft, but each week it's "draft" in a different sense of the word. We started with talking about the "who" of the ministry. You have been drafted into service as a Christian to minister in the places in which God has set you. He drafted you from before the foundation of the world.

Week two we talked about draft horses, and how it is that this ministry is accomplished. As the Lord strengthens us with the Word and Sacrament, we are formed into servants of Christ who can pull the weight of the ministry as we set our eyes on Jesus and as we work together toward the common goal of lives transformed through the Gospel.

Week three is, also draft. Draft: ... Mightier than the Sword. We'll talk about... What is it I'm here for again?

It's so often that we get bogged down in the process of everyday life. One more year on this earth. One more doctor's appointment. One more body part that ain't what it used to be.

Our whole lives just seem to go from one draft to another: that blank email draft, that architectural draft of a house or schematic that needs to be built, that Word document for that paper that our professor needs at 11:59 tonight that we

said we wouldn't wait until the last minute to start. What is it I'm here for? Who cares about one more draft turned into a finished product?

A draft is something tentative. Incomplete. An email for which you haven't hit send. A paper that isn't ready for the professor to read. A floorplan that you can't give to the builder because you haven't even put in the stairs yet.

Our lives are drafts, and we live in a world of incomplete stories, unfinished business, and prototypes that never made it to the production line. We're in a world of people who keep on asking "what is it I'm here for?" Yet behind every writer's block, every fork in the road, every unfinished project, there is a masterpiece inviting us in to let us know what it is I'm here for.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

The Word of God is no mere draft or half-baked blunder. God burst the windows open and in came the draft, that is, the Spirit who inspired every jot and tittle of the sixty-six books here in this *magnum opus*. Through it, God is speaking to teach, to correct, and to train you in righteousness. What is it I'm here for? To have the author of life conform the draft that is my life to the greatest story ever told.

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." What is it I'm here for? "Preach the word." "κήρυξον τὸν λόγον" That's the motto of my alma mater, Concordia Theological Seminary—Fort Wayne. Fitting for a school that trains preachers.

"Preach the word." Preach that masterpiece which brings meaning to a world that's in search of a story. Preach the word which is ultimately about the Word of God who became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ who was crucified to forgive and to save sinners like me and you and rose again to let us know that life in Him *always* has a happy ending.

What is it I'm here for? What is the ministry? It's words. Words that are in line with and are from the very mouth of the Word of God Himself who is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

And so it shall be that it's Mondays locked away in the youth room hoping the draft will turn into something that'll preach. It's poring over the **"the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."** It's sitting by the hospital bed with a beloved parishioner who is dying, confident that these words are profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. These Words of God are not some tentative draft but a draft of the Holy Spirit blown in by God Himself.

Week after week, month after month, these words are preached into the water to make baptism something more than just a bath. Preached words into the bread and wine to make a meal more than just a Kennedy Half-Dollar's worth of bread and a thimble of wine. Words preached from a guy wearing a bath robe and a funny scarf that are promises bigger than him from a God who is happy to eat with tax collectors, sinners, and other riffraff.

What is it I'm here for? Not just to listen to the oddest sermon you've ever encountered! Draft: ...Mightier than the Sword is the title of this sermon and we're not just talking about the "what?" of life, but the "what?" of ministry.

“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” So it is that as the pastor drafts one sermon after another on any given Sunday, at a wedding, at a funeral, or some other special occasion, that these drafts have you find your place in that story of God. As the Word is preached into you—both to assure as well as to correct—this story of Jesus becomes your story and you're able to make sense of all those drafts in your life: those unfinished chapters, those loose ends, and those burning questions.

The Word of God isn't just a Sunday morning thing. It gets hammered into us and shapes our story and our lives. Before we know it, we have answers for those friends, those coworkers, those classmates whose lives feel like the pages of a draft tossed off a ledge—blowing in the wind, each page scattered in a different direction. That isn't a Christian's life. We know the rest of the story. We have the God-breathed Scripture to provide hope, comfort, and peace to those wandering through this life of cliffhanger endings.

Get up. Roll out of bed. Go for a run. Eat breakfast. Shower. Get dressed. Go to work. Draft a few emails and design a few widgets. Go home. Eat dinner. Watch TV. Go to bed. Day after day of this may make us ask, “What is it I'm here for?” And so it is that as you settle into your weekly routine, God's Word answers that for you. **“For we are [the Father's masterpiece], created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** One poopy diaper at a time. One quilt sewed. One negotiation accomplished. One project completed. One distraught neighbor comforted. One draft turned into finished product at a time, God has given you good works to do: be it ever so mundane.

The “what?” of ministry connects our words to *this* Word of Hope. Trusting that they aren't just words. They aren't just drafts, but something deeper. Something reliable and life-giving. Amen.