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AD FONTES  
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## HOPE THAT BUILDS

BY OCEAN ANDREW

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ACCORDING TO LEGEND, MARTIN LUTHER ONCE SAID, "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree." I have thought about that line often—not as sentimentality, but as a reminder to stay optimistic about the future and take meaningful action in the present. A belief the world is collapsing is self-fulfilling. But Christian hope demands something different: hope that fuels action. We have eternal hope in Christ, and yet I have noticed a trend among Lutherans to misapply that hope, using it as an excuse for passivity. We forget that we may live long lives, leave behind children and grandchildren, and steward a world they inherit. If we hope for peace, stability, and flourishing for our descendants, then we ought to build toward that goal with everything we have.

### A LUTHERAN APPROACH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In 2016, my friend and fellow Lutheran Hunter Andersen and I launched On the Hook Fish and Chips with a modest goal: start a food truck serving high-quality fish. We built the first truck with a \$50,000 loan. The vehicle was over 20 years old and the kitchen was cheaply made—but it worked. We operated it out of my 500-square-foot rental home, working over 100 hours a week through summer and as much as we could while in class. We focused relentlessly on food quality

and customer experience. Within a year we added a second truck. A year later, two more. Today, we operate 13 trucks of our own and franchise nationally. I now run the business with my business partner Blaine Rasmuson, and together we have refined the model into something scalable and investible. Through this process, we have been able to create real economic opportunities. Many of our truck employees earn over \$80,000 a year, and several now own their own trucks. Most of our leadership began on the front lines. When you build something, you do not merely create value; you create opportunity. You bring your community closer to good work.



*Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard.*  
Author unknown, 1531.

## REFRAMING AMBITION

I have heard ambition labeled as greed, and it can be so, but I think that framing misunderstands the importance of it. If we believe God provides, then we are free to act boldly, making wise, courageous decisions because Christ has redeemed our time. In fact, refusing to build, refusing to multiply what we have been given, may itself be a form of greed: a

hoarding of potential. Ecclesiastes 3:13 says: "...everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man." And in Isaiah 43:18-19, we are reminded: "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." We are not meant to long for the past. We are meant to build now. If we are made in the image of a Creator, then creating—whether through business, family, or culture—is part of our mandate. I have seen faithful Lutherans edge toward testing God by expecting Him to provide while doing nothing. It was once said to me in jest, "Even the Israelites had to bend down to pick up the manna." God provides, but we are charged to gather.

## THREE TAKEAWAYS

There are three things I hope readers walk away with: Everything I have received is a gift—and it matters how we use gifts. God gave me a capable mind, a strong body, and placed me in a time and place of abundance. The people He brought into my life were blessings. But gifts don't build things on their own. Stewardship requires effort. As Proverbs 24:33-34 warns: "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man." Work hard—especially while you are young. I have never hired anyone because they were Lutheran. I have hired those who hustle, who carry responsibility, and who want to grow. That said, the best hires I have made—those who have brought the most value—have often come from my church. That is not favoritism. That is a result of shared values, strong character, and earned trust. But each individual must prove themselves on their own individual merit. Your beliefs do not exempt you from effort—they should deepen it. We live in one of the most privileged times and places in human history. In addition to living in the only country on earth with true free speech and freedom to practice our faith, most Americans are in the global top 10% in wealth. We spend in a week what most people around the world earn in a month. That is not a reason for guilt—it is a reason for responsibility. We have tools our ancestors could not dream of.

## A CALL TO BUILD

We live in a country where a lot of hustle, the right people, and a bit of knowledge can turn \$50,000 of debt into a \$20+ million company. That is not a boast: it is a testimony. And it is possible for others, too. But it requires showing up, risking failure, and honoring God with effort. So, here is my invitation: to young men and women, to workers and leaders, to dreamers and doers: build. Start something. Own something. Steward what is in front of you. Be known for your integrity, reliability, and relentless effort. Let us be builders. Let us work with faith. Let us honor God not only in what we believe, but in what we make.