

Unsatisfying Bread and Sleepless Nights

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Preacher: Curtis Cook

[0 : 00] It's my joy to introduce to you Pastor Curtis Cook. You guys are familiar with his name because we've been praying for him and for Brandy and for Hope Fellowship Church for, I guess, seven years now in rotation, ever since we started out as a church plant.

And there's a lot of connection points here. You guys know Craig. Craig, one of our church members, the church that he came from in Oklahoma City, Eagle Heights Churches, the church actually sent Curtis and Brandy out.

And they planted Hope. I just found this out this morning that it was 20 years ago in September. So they're celebrating a 20th anniversary, which is amazing. I hope I get to be a part of that to celebrate with them.

And Hope's been, I think this is, Curtis will never say this, but I think it's fair to say one of the most important, significant, strategic churches in the Boston area for the last two decades.

And it started when there weren't many, many gospel preaching churches in the area. And they've been instrumental in sending out a lot of church plants, including some churches that we pray for regularly, including the Beacon Church in Belmont, and as well as the Beacon Community Church with Dane Helsing, as well as Trinity Church Bedford with Scott Cope.

[1 : 20] These are all churches that Hope has been part of. And you guys might not, some of you might not know this, but when we were sent out from King of Grace Church in Haverhill to plant, for the first year, when we only had five or six people at the beginning, we weren't having public services.

We were just meeting at my home. And during that time, we wanted our church to benefit from a fully functioning church. So we actually joined Hope for a year. And we were part of Hope for a year. And Curtis pastored us during that time. And after that, in Sunday morning worship, we'll have our own service in the evening in my living room. And that's when we were evangelizing and building up the core team.

And so I'm really profoundly grateful to Curtis and to Hope and Brandy. Obviously, Curtis could not be doing what he's doing without you. So thank you for the work that you do to support and to help. And so I want to introduce to you, Curtis, please come preach God's word to us. Let's welcome. It is a great joy to be with you.

[2 : 25] Like you pray for us, we pray often for Trinity Cambridge, and we're grateful for that. I love and appreciate Sean and Hannah. When I am with Sean, there are numerous things that I admire about him.

Some of the things are just an evident love for Jesus. So in conversations with Sean, it's obvious that he loves Jesus, that he loves his family, that he loves his wife and kids, but also that he loves you as a church.

And so often it's evident just the weight of both responsibility and joy that he feels as a shepherd of this flock. And so he's often speaking of what God is doing in you and encouraging things, but also, you know, feeling the weight of what it means to pastor a church.

And so just know that that's one of the many things that encourages me when I'm with Sean. And then just as a pastor who once had young kids, it does our heart good to see a pastor and family on the front row.

That's where we used to drag our kids to the front row and they sat on the front row with and now our kids are gone and grown up, but they came up there with us, right? And sat on the front row with us and trained them up in that way. I think they forever sit on the back row now after having grown up on the front row, but they did their time growing up there as well.

[3 : 38] I'd love to pray for us and then we will begin to look at the text. Father, we're grateful for your grace. Lord, that you shower us in grace in so many ways. And one of those graces is the establishment and the continuation of local congregations.

Father, we're grateful for this church, Trinity Church, for the way you've sustained them and kept them, but you are at work in them for the good future you have for them. Father, we thank for these moments as we look to your word.

We ask, Father, you would give us open hearts to hear and receive, or you would work through your word by the Spirit to grow us to be more and more like Christ.

So would you help me now to be clear and helpful in the preaching of the word? In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. If you're able and willing, if you would, let's stand together. So we read our passage for this morning, Psalm 127.

If you don't have a copy of the Bible at the table back there, there's some free Bibles there. You can grab one now or following the service. So please grab one of those as a gift from Trinity Cambridge. So Psalm 127.

[4 : 44] Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stay awake in vain.

It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil. For he gives to his beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb of reward.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them. He shall not be put to shame when he speaks to his enemies in the gate.

Amen. You can be seated. If you travel much around our country, you'll notice a number of differences from region to region.

How fast they talk or how slowly they talk. How fast they walk or they don't walk anywhere at all. How laid back they may be or how tightly wound the culture seems to be.

[5 : 50] Of course, Boston is known for fast talking, fast walking, driven, aggressive, fast driving people. And we say, well, of course, why wouldn't you be?

Of course, anyone who wants to get anything done has to be those things. So Bostonians, we look at people in the South and the West and we wonder, how do those people live?

How do they get anything done moving so slowly? Personally, I'm intrigued at times about living in a place like San Diego. I've never lived there. I've only been there once. But it seems to me nearly paradise.

The sun is out, I think, every day. 75, no humidity. And I can imagine to myself, I could live there.

They need churches there. Maybe I'm supposed to go pastor in San Diego. And yet, as I've thought about it at times, I would think to myself, I think I would go crazy.

Because at least my sense of what it's like on the West Coast is that life is just slower paced. And I think I would be too tightly wound to actually thrive and survive in San Diego.

[6 : 52] So I stay in cold, gloomy Boston as it is today. Our fast-paced, aggressive lives do allow us to get much done. In fact, allow us to do much good in our city and in the world.

But our fast-paced, aggressive lives also easily consume us. Consuming our hearts, our souls, grinding us up to the point of exhaustion.

And an exhaustion often deeper than even physical exhaustion. I wonder if you've ever felt yourself worn down. Exhausted by the pace of life and work and study.

Have you ever wondered, is this really what God intends for me? Or is there another way? So it's worthwhile for us to consider, you know, are we investing our lives wisely and well?

Is there a way to work hard, but in a way that's sustainable? A way that matters? That's what we're going to consider today from Psalm 127.

[8 : 03] And we'll see this emphasis in our text. Trust the Lord who builds fruitful lives. Trust the Lord who builds fruitful lives. And look at our short psalm in only these two parts.

First, unless the Lord, vanity. And second, from the Lord, heritage.

So unless the Lord, vanity. From the Lord, heritage. So first, unless the Lord, vanity. See this in verses 1 and 2. The Israelites at the time of the psalm's writing had the same challenges that we face today.

The temptation to busy themselves. The construction of a house. The protection of a city. And the idea of building a house would include certainly the physical building of a home. But even beyond that, the building of a family.

Their life together. The psalmist writes of the protection of the city. In ancient Israel, the cities would normally be built up with a wall around them. Protecting them from attackers who would come from outside.

[9 : 05] It could easily become the focus of any Israelite of that day. To focus on the building of their home. Their life. The protection of the city they're in. And we see in this the danger of building our lives through what we could call self-reliance.

And we see this repeatedly. The alternative or the warning is unless the Lord builds it. Unless the Lord watches. So if we try to build our physical homes or the broader home of our lives.

Or try to build our life on anything other than the resources that God would give us. The psalmist says it's in vain. The self-reliant house, it's vanity.

The very best that I can produce on my own, it's not enough. The very best that you can produce. If it's from self-reliance, friends, it will ultimately be shown to be vain.

Same goes for the security of the city. Security of our families. The security of anything that we have. We certainly also apply this to your education, to your career.

[10 : 13] If it's grounded primarily in your self-reliant efforts. However great those efforts are. In time, it will eventually be shown to be empty.

In vain. Destined to fail. I wonder how often you find yourself struggling with self-reliance. I know that I do.

That I so easily fall into this. My heart tends to lean so easily, so naturally. That self-reliance actually feels comfortable. It actually feels natural.

When I'm not living that way. That's what actually feels strange to me. Over the years, I've tried to have a day off as a pastor because of our sort of strange schedule. But I've found it profoundly difficult across the years to have a day off.

To keep it. And not because of the church members. Not because of anyone sort of watching me. But simply my inability to step back.

[11 : 17] And not feel like I need to do something. To believe that God can work even if I'm not working. And so it's fueled by my own fear.

My own self-reliance. My own lack of trust in God. And every Monday, which is the day I typically take off. I face that struggle again. So tomorrow, I'll face that same struggle.

Will I really step back and trust God? Or will I somehow convince myself? No, today, I just need to do this work or that. What's the result of our self-reliant living?

Verse 2. It leads to this vicious cycle of rising early and staying up late. So we rise up early because the work must be done. And we believe that the work depends on us.

And so we work all day. Then we stay up late. And because we must come through. We stay up through the night often. And when we do finally fall asleep. It's unsatisfying sleep that doesn't refresh.

[12 : 14] And often we have sleepless nights throughout. So we're either working and worrying about what we're working on. Or worrying that we're not working enough.

And so we lose sleep. So we throw ourselves into more self-reliant work. And we work and we work. But we aren't satisfied. And we are never truly at rest.

I wonder if you know this experience. Of grinding so hard. And then even when you lie in bed. Your mind is racing with worry.

Projects. The to-do list. So then you face the exhaustion of anxious, sleepless nights. And we're cautioned that we shouldn't be satisfied to eat what's called this bread of anxious labor.

In verse 2. So we have a choice of whether it will work and eat anxiously and nervously. And notice we see that we will receive some bread. But it's this bread of anxious toil.

[13 : 23] It's a bread that cannot truly satisfy. But unfortunately the dangerous part is that because some bread is produced, it can convince us we're making real progress.

But in fact it's a treadmill that we never step off of. It's an all-consuming treadmill. And self-reliant work is so dangerous because it can produce progress for a time.

So the fruit of extra hours of work and worry can appear to be substantial for a while. So we worry and we work and we make a pair of progress. It looks like we're getting ahead.

And this self-reliance is doubly dangerous and tempting in our culture, in our city, because it looks so respectable. If you live like this, you'll accumulate accomplishments and degrees.

If you live like this, you'll actually climb the ladder of success. You'll get lots of affirmation. If you rise early and stay up late and self-reliant work, you will likely be applauded.

[14 : 29] You will certainly never get fired. You may get promoted. So it actually just fuels this self-reliant working. It will not initially lessen your success as a student.

It may help you rise to the top. And almost no one in our city will caution you about this. Your employer, your supervisor will likely not pull you aside and say, I'm just worried you're working too much.

You're working way more than we're paying you for. Please slow down. They're not going to do that. They're going to give you more projects. They'll give them extra things to do. If we live like this, we'll actually fit in very well in Cambridge and Boston.

If we don't live like this, we will feel strange in Cambridge and Boston. Now, an important question is, is the psalmist, is God against building a house?

Is he against hard work to protect the city? And the answer is no. God himself created work before sin entered the world.

[15 : 44] So if you're hoping I was going to tell you today, never work again, that's actually the other side. The way we don't have that option, work is good. There's a rightness to it in all these various forms.

So work is from God. But as a result of sin entering into the world, work has become difficult. It is so often weighty and feels like toil.

But it is good and God-glorifying for God's people to work. To work in any number of areas, in the home, outside of the home, in the life of the church, in the community.

And good can be done through your work. And there are times in life when one may have to work extra hard. That there is a season when it may mean rising early, staying up late, missing some things because of a particular weighty aspect of your life.

And Christians, since we're working to glorify God, we should be extra diligent workers. We should be reliable. Our supervisors, our employers, those who we work under, should think it's a great thing to have a Christian.

[16 : 59] Because they're so reliable, so trustworthy, so diligent. So God doesn't say to us, don't stay up early, or don't get up early for work. He doesn't say, don't stay up late, but he does give us this significant principle for life.

He says, don't rise early, or don't stay up late out of fear. Out of anxiety. Fueled by self-reliance. So our text holds out a caution of the danger of self-reliant living. But it also holds out the potential for a transformed outlook. So we should see the potential of work and rest that relies on God. So this text is both a daunting warning, but also a great promise marked by hope. There's good news for the beloved.

Referred to in verse 2. Now a relevant question is, who are these who are called the beloved? Beloved. The beloved of God. And it is those who trust in him. And by beloved, it means those who are loved by God.

[18 : 05] It is an identity. It is not those who are loved by God because of what we do, what we have done, or what we will do. But it is who we are.

And for the good news is, we are the beloved of God. Those who trust in Jesus. And how did God bring us in to be known as his beloved? It is through the perfect sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. God the Son who died in our place so that we wouldn't have to. He came to take the place of sinners and rebels for our lives of running from him, of rejecting him. Christ died through his death and resurrection, purchasing, providing this free gift of salvation, which includes reconciliation with God, adoption by God, forgiveness of all of our sins, brought in and now known as the beloved of God.

So, friend, if you're a Christian, this is who you are. One of the beloved of God. And because it's grounded in what Christ has done, it is not grounded in what you have done or will do.

And, friends, this is tremendously freeing for us. And if you're not a Christian, I wonder, do you see what this says in 1 John 3?

[19 : 26] It speaks this way of the beloved of God. See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God.

And so we are. If you're new to Christianity, the center of Christianity is not people trying to become good through our own work, but a glorious God who out of great love sent forth God the Son to

rescue, to redeem, to bring back rebels and sinners like us, all grounded in his love, not in our goodness, not in our merit, not in our devotion.

So the God of the universe loves. And he makes sinners into sons and daughters. And I realize this may be very new to you, but we would love for you to know this God who loves in this way.

For those who are Christians, I wonder, whose significant approval do you long for most? And how often does that lead to our working?

Because we so want someone to say, well done. To say, I'm proud of you. To say that you did it.

[20 : 49] So maybe a family member, maybe a boss, a supervisor, a professor, but you long for that. And so you run and you run and you run. And one day, maybe there is some affirmation, but it's never quite enough.

And sometimes there's no affirmation at all. Or sometimes the one we're running for the affirmation, there's someone we don't even have a relationship with, perhaps a broken relationship with a parent or someone who's passed on from this life even.

And so we run and we run and we can never quite find satisfaction. But we're trying to please someone else. So friends, the fact of being brought in as a beloved of God, God is the one who says to you, I approve you through Christ.

So friends, that can free us from this treadmill of running and running and running for the approval of others because God himself approves you, friend.

That is freeing when we live from that. We see that God loves us, but he also gives. Look at verse two. It says, God gives, which is the very nature of our God.

[21 : 59] He is the giver. And the God of grace pours out gifts on his children. And notice what he gives to his beloved, verse two, for he gives to his beloved sleep. He gives sleep, rest, refreshment.

And I wonder if you were to, this morning before this, just nailed, wrote down, what are 50 things that God gives to his people I doubt sleep would have been in the top 50. Perhaps depending on life circumstance, maybe it'd be really near the top.

But in general, we don't think of that as a gift. And yet here, in light of these needs that we have, here's this picture of God giving to his children sleep, restful sleep, restoring sleep.

And what must we do to experience this gift? We must humbly receive it. For it takes humility to cease work and to try to go to sleep.

And God created us with these bodies that need to rest. When we try to maximize the hours, to see how little sleep we can get by on.

[23 : 07] We are thoroughly caffeinated, myself included at times. But also try to squeeze more out of the day. But friend, God made us so that our bodies need to stop, which should be a daily reminder that would humble us.

Say, however many great things you can do throughout the day, you must cease and rest and sleep. So sleep helps us then to potentially fight pride and cultivate humility.

Now I understand that for many people, sleep can be a great struggle. That you try, but it's often sleepless nights. So this is not a promise where you should feel guilty if you struggle with sleep.

That's worth always considering. Are there particular things that are making you worry, that are impacting your sleep? But friend, don't let this be an extra burden if you already have a hard time sleeping. Don't feel condemned by this text.

But know that it is God's desire to give to us rest and to sustain, even though our bodies are often impacted by the fall in so many ways and things that cause us not to be able to sleep well.

[24 : 18] There's something interesting when we think about the translation here at the end of verse two. It can be translated, as our text has, he gives to his beloved sleep. It can also be translated, that he gives to his beloved even in his sleep.

New American Standard has it that way. Both are good, faithful translations. So when we think about it, at the very least, he's telling us God gives sleep, which is a tremendous gift. But likely also, based on what we know of God, not only does God give us rest, but friends, while we rest, while we sleep, God works on our behalf while we're sleeping.

God can accomplish more on our behalf while we sleep than we can while we're awake. Imagine with me a wheat farmer. So the farmer works hard.

He and his family, they spend all day out in the field preparing, sowing, doing all that they can. But eventually, at the end of the day, the farmer has to go to bed and rest.

And while he rests, what happens? The wheat grows. God is the one who gives the growth to that. And friends, in so many areas of our life, that's what we do when we go to sleep.

[25 : 33] We say, God, yeah, I worked hard today. I can't do anything else on this problem or this situation or this weighty thing. So I'm going to sleep and saying, God, would you work? And I trust that you will work even while I sleep.

So friend, might that change the way that we close our eyes at night? Say, God, I don't know the answer. But I turn it over to you, trusting you are not asleep even while I sleep.

Friends, we should also consider the other side of these cautions, which is hope. So the caution is, unless the Lord builds it, the builder labors in vain. But the flip side would be, but if the Lord builds it, then the building isn't in vain.

Unless the Lord watches, the watchman labors in vain. But if the Lord does guard, then the watchman doesn't stay awake in vain. So friend, there is a way that as we work with the strength that God gives to us, that He works through your work.

The Lord will build. He will empower your efforts. He will give you rest. And He will work while you rest. So how might we begin to seek to embrace and grow in this transformed view of work?

[26 : 48] One, friends, I would encourage you, pray that God would enable us to feel the weight of this caution. Because it's a sobering word.

It's easy to ignore, but say, I need to really feel the weight and the warning about self-reliance.

Second, friend, I would encourage you today, repent of self-reliant living.

Where this marks your life, as it does for me so often, repent of that. God, would you forgive me?

Would you help me also to turn? Would you change my mind? Third, pray that God would help us to discern our own hearts.

You might ask yourself questions like this. Why do you stay up late working? Why do you rise early?

What's driving you to work so long and so hard? Whose applause or approval do you chase after?

Is it fear that fuels that or insecurity or pride?

[27 : 55] You might also consider who could help you? In a city like Boston, Cambridge, where everyone else is going to say, do more, do more, in order to try to live differently, you will likely need someone to help you.

So is there a brother or sister who'd say, I actually would like for you to ask me a question once a month, once a week, because I want to try to live differently so you might invite someone to help you.

Also consider this, friends, we want to be a light in our city, in our neighborhoods, on the campus, and our workplace. Friends, how distinctive would it be that if you worked hard, diligently, sometimes long hours, but you weren't always frazzled when everyone else is?

When you weren't always overwhelmed with anxiety when everyone else is? Not because you're perfect, because by God's grace, you're thinking and living differently.

How compelling would that be? I mean, in a lab where everyone else is frazzled, if you showed up with hope and diligence and excellence, wouldn't that be curious to those who don't know Christ?

[29 : 16] The last thing would be this. Friend, when possible, receive rest from God. Receive sleep from God. So here's my recommendation.

Today, go take a nap. That's the take home for you. This afternoon. Go find some time and take a nap. I'm going to try my best to do that. It's a pretty good rhythm.

That's one thing I'm good at is napping. That's a good thing to say, there's work you could do this afternoon. I'm going to slow and sleep. Or at the very least, just lay down.

Put electronic devices down. Just be still. So we see, unless the Lord, vanity. Then second and more briefly, we see from the Lord, heritage.

We see this in verses three through five. The psalmist tells us that children are a heritage and a reward. Just based on the way that the verses turn here, you may, if you're not married or if you don't have children, may immediately think, this part's not for me, so I'm going to tune that out.

[30 : 20] I would encourage you to stay with us because I think there's more here for all of us than we might think. So it begins by saying that children are a heritage from the Lord. They're a gift from God. All children, every child is a gift from God.

This is not saying, importantly, this is not saying that children are earned. He's not saying that if you are good enough, God will give you children. That's not what the text is saying.

Friend, if you don't have children and you long for children, it is not that somehow you have not measured up to receive the gift of children. That's not the sense of what it's saying here. But it is saying for all who have children, they are a gift from God and they must be seen as such. And so friend, if you are a parent, do you think of your children most often as a gift? Or do you find yourself often thinking of them as something that takes from you? For parenting is a weighty thing and an exhausting hobby. But do you mainly think of they take my time, they take my money, they take my energy.

[31 : 28] Friend, children are a gift from God. Both for families and for churches. And children are a gift to this church.

Also, we see that children are strategic like arrows. Verse four and five, like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them.

So God intends for children to be like a well-honed weapon, like an arrow in the hands of an expert warrior sent out to accomplish significant purposes. So the psalmist says, parents, children are like that.

They can be invested in, equipped, prepared, and then sent out into the world to Lord willing to do significant good. So parents, do you think and pray in that way for your kids?

And what are the prayers for your kids? Is it that they would achieve the most? Or is it that most of all, they would glorify God in whatever they do?

[32 : 31] Friends, as so many of you feel the weight who've come into our city, from our city, feel the weight of parental expectations, which are well-intentioned, but often are a weight that's too much to bear, aren't they?

And so parents, may we be those who love our kids, but they hear much from us, well done, I'm proud of you. Most of all, that you would love Jesus, not that you would get into this school, or that school, or climb this ladder, or that.

Now parents, the promise here is not that if we do certain things, our kids are guaranteed to follow Jesus. That's not the promise.

But, we are called to this intentional devotion, to training up, pointing our children to Christ, with the desire, the hope, the prayer, that one day they would come to a saving faith in Christ.

So we want to be wise and strategic, persevering. So parents, we must think about our parenting. It is hard. Life is busy.

[33 : 38] So many things grab our time and attention. Let me encourage you parents, let your kids see you love Jesus. Not in a fake way.

Not in a perfect way, but let them see you love Jesus. Let them see you love the church. Studies consistently show that the greatest likelihood of children having the faith of their parents is do they see their parents love Jesus?

Do they see their parents love the local church? It's really that fundamental. It's a huge part of it. I know that life is busy, but it's worth thinking through like what shapes the calendar of your family? Is it the things that you want to prioritize or is it your children's schedule? I know. I'm treading on thin ice here, I suppose.

It's not my church, so I'll tread. But especially with younger kids, there's a great temptation and I felt it well when our kids were younger to kind of maintain an order of life, which often felt like we have to do these certain things schedule-wise for our kids to keep life together, which led to, in time, withdraw from the life of the church.

[34 : 58] We can't ever have someone over or go to their house or be a part of a group because of our kids' schedule. Just let me say, friends, your kids need to see you love Jesus and love the church.

And sometimes that may mean them staying up a little bit later, but I think it's worth it. Even if it messes up life for a couple of days, that they'll bounce back. And people across generations have been raising kids long before us.

It can be done. And so I would just say, make tweaks here and there. Stretch them out a little bit more, but it will serve your kids well too because your kids love being with other people from the church as well.

Build in things like the Sunday gathering into the rhythm of your family. And as the kids get older, they won't ask, are we going to church? Because they just understand, well, that's just what we do. Just what our family does.

We gather with the church. And for those of you who are single parents, we understand it's a weighty gift you have. So let this church love you and serve you and help you in that parenting. [36 : 08] Are we sufficient for the task? No, we're not. Parenting is daunting, weighty. But God will give us grace. He will empower you.

He will help you in the parenting. As I mentioned, if you don't have children, you're thinking, well, this isn't for me, but that's actually not true at all because we see in the ministry of Jesus a new view of family.

Matthew chapter 12, we see a time when Jesus was teaching and his mother and his brothers come to him. They wanted to speak to Jesus and Jesus replies and says, who is my mother and who are my brothers?

He stretched out his hand toward his disciples and he said, here are my mother and my brothers for whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. And so Jesus helps us see that there's a new view of family.

Now that's not to downplay or say that our earthly families are unimportant or that we aren't to love them. That's not what Jesus was saying, but he's saying that now in his kingdom, this is the truest family, the family of God.

[37 : 14] These are brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins and we actually have more in common with them than anyone else. At the beginning of the Old Testament we see that the call to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and that was done primarily through having children, multiplying in that way.

In the New Testament the call is the same, be fruitful and multiply and yet it's slightly different because it is said this way, go and make disciples of all the nations.

Same idea, be fruitful and multiply but it's no longer the multiplication only of a biological family but it's the good news of Jesus going out, people hearing and believing.

So the same multiplication is happening as the call of God's people and so friend whether you're married or not, children or not, we all have the opportunity to have spiritual offspring as we share the good news, as we disciple others, friend, in your life across the decades you could play a part in so many lives for the sake of the gospel.

So the family of God has changed, changes everything. So friend, if you're a Christian think about how you can invest in others, sharing the good news with those who don't know Christ, helping others to grow up in Christ and through that sending out arrows.

[38 : 38] So we do this, we spend time a clearly defined discipling relationship. So many of these in undefined but just a friendship where we're trying to encourage one another for their own spiritual good.

Walking with a clear sort of spiritual mentorship. Friend, there's so many ways that you play a part in this. And so imagine with me if you have 40 more years, 50 more years of life, if you invested in making disciples, joining in, making disciples, how many spiritual offspring there might be sent out into the world.

I didn't think about this church. Your church is in the same city as our church and I assume has some of the same beauties and challenges. One of the beauties and challenges is so many people come and go, don't they?

They come and study or work and then they sinfully leave Boston. Okay, it's not sinful but it's painful, isn't it?

Right? We get to know people, we love them and then they move and I can feel, especially this time of year, we say goodbye to so many and we shed tears and for those who stay, it's exhausting, isn't it?

[39 : 51] And we're tempted even to think, okay, yeah, I'm not going to let any new people in to my heart. I may welcome them, yeah, they can sit in the row behind me but I'm tired of saying goodbye or friend, you can certainly protect yourself in that way and I'm tempted pretty much like May through July to do that as I mourn the loss and sometimes I think to myself, I want to move and pastor a church, maybe in San Diego but where nobody else moves away, where it's all the same people for the next 20 years but then I think, I don't know that I want the same people for 20 years either so maybe actually, there's a gift of this coming and going as well.

So let me encourage you, those of you who are trying to stay, I know it's painful but it's a worthwhile pain but also just imagine this church over the past years, over the decades to come, how many

spiritual arrows will be sent out to the world from here?

They came as an undergrad, they came as a grad student, they were here for work, you invested in them, you helped them to grow up in Christ and now they're sent out to the world and what impact through this church and so many other in greater Boston as people come and go, friend, do you see the opportunity you have as a Christian to send out, to join in sending out arrows to the world?

And friend, as a part of that is loving the children in this church as well. And so those of you who are not parents, you have a key role to play in the lives of the children in this church because the very nature of someone being a parent makes them patently uncool to their own kids very quickly because they're parents, that's just who they are.

But friend, you who get to come alongside of them, whether it's by teaching in the classes and I hope that you do that some or it is simply by modeling before them a love for Jesus and the church will shape these kids more than you know.

[41 : 53] You disciple them by your life. We have an empty nest now, so our daughter's 25, our son is 21. They've both moved across the country, sinners who've left Boston. No, they've moved away.

And so far at least, they both love the local church. But that's not because of Brandy and me. I'm convinced it's because of our church who loved them. Not a perfect church by any means, but a church who loved them well, people who lived before them, older teenagers, college students who were older than them who loved Jesus, modeled that for them, gave them a beautiful view of the church.

We have no biological family in Massachusetts, so our family has been the church. So friends, you have the chance to do that with every kid as a part of this church, that they would see you and their view of the church will be shaped so much by that.

So let me help you to remember that opportunity, that responsibility to love and invest in the kids of this church. For it'll be costly for us all to give ourselves into making disciples, sending out arrows to the world.

[43 : 09] Friends, that's a worthwhile thing. That's a worthwhile work to even exhaust ourselves at at times, to even lose some sleep, but not from anxious toil, a kingdom work that really matters.

So friends, let's pray and labor together that we would spend our days well in a fruitful way, in a curious way for those around us, in a way that would glorify God.

Let's pray together. Father, we're thankful for your goodness and your grace. And Father, we ask for help because we live in a city that will only push us further into self-reliance.

So I pray for some this morning that just the wise step would be to just repent of that. They might even begin to imagine what could life look like. And that as we're scattered into the neighborhoods, as parents, students, as workers who could do so in a way that would glorify you.

Help us to trust that you can do more even when we sleep than we can ever do. We pray for the children of this church that they would hear and believe the gospel at a young age.

[44 : 31] And Father, we pray for, we're thankful for already how Trinity has sent out arrows to the nations and will continue to do that. We pray, Father, you would bless them with decades more of that.

Encourage those who stay behind even when it's painful and hard to see the goodness of that in Jesus' name. Amen.