

Like a Weaned Child

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at Christchurcheastbay.org. Good morning. Let's see if I remember how to do this.

For those of you who haven't met yet, my name is Andrew, and like Jonathan said, I've been on sabbatical the past four months, and it's been awesome. But I know I've got a lot of catching up to do, so if I haven't met you yet, I would love to meet you, look forward to getting to know you, and reconnecting with the rest of you.

And before I start, I just want to say thank you. Thank you to everyone, particularly our session, for letting me go off on this four-month sabbatical. Thank you to the staff and the deacons, the leaders who really took up a lot of my responsibilities.

And thank you to really the whole church for celebrating this season for us, not letting us, making us feel too guilty about it, but just supporting us, being glad for us as we've been able to be away for really an amazing four months of, you know, living slow, living unhurried, living with way more margin, way more time to pray and to reflect.

[1:22] I got to play a lot more basketball. It was great. We traveled a bunch, caught up with a lot of old friends, and not only did I finish my reading list, but I also finished the even longer honey-do list that Chelsea gave me, day one of my sabbatical.

If you want to come to my house and drink some water, I just changed the water filter so you can come and enjoy that. But seriously, it's super good to be back. You know, I didn't feel burnt out going into the sabbatical, and I'm so thankful to this church for that, and I'm also not dreading coming back.

In fact, Chelsea and I are both quite ready to be back with our church family. You know, in the past 17 weeks, I visited 20 churches in the past 17 weeks.

And, you know, while it was nice to show up and not have any responsibility, Chelsea and I are really coming back with, like, a renewed appreciation for what God's doing here at Christ Church and the unique way God's called us to be the church here in the Bay Area.

So we're ready. Let's go, right? Now, Jonathan had originally had me preaching and starting our next series, our fall series in Exodus, focusing on the Ten Commandments.

[2:34] But I was like, could I just do a one-off on my first Sunday back, preach something from my heart? And so that's why we're in Psalm 131 today. And it's not necessarily because I think it's what you all need.

I don't know where you're all at at this moment. I hope to find out soon. But Psalm 131 was what I needed. Psalm 131. Charles Spurgeon called this one of the shortest psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn.

And I basically spent the last 17 weeks trying to preach this psalm to myself and into my heart. Because sabbatical, it was amazing. It was truly great.

One of the greatest gifts I've ever received. I'd go on these long, long walks every day, at least an hour, with God and with my dog Sammy. And, you know, on these walks, sometimes I could barely think of what to even say to God other than, thank you.

Thank you, God. This is amazing. I don't deserve this. Thank you for everything. And not just the sabbatical. My kids are happy and healthy. My wife and I are happily employed.

[3:44] We own a home in the Bay Area. We have everything we need and more. And relationally, we are ridiculously blessed. My parents, my brother, my sister, our spouses, we actually like each

other.

And we all live in the same town. We get to see each other multiple times a month. And we love living life together, raising our kids to love Christ together. I often feel like I'm living Job's life before all the bad things happened.

And, you know, there just were so many moments during my sabbatical when I truly thought, I had this actual thought that, you know, I can't think of a single person in the entire world that I would trade lives with.

Isn't that something to be able to say? That's a blessed life. That's a rich life. I can't think of anyone else who I'd trade lives with. Steph Curry's kind of close. But I wouldn't want to give up my basketball skills, right?

So, seriously though, I just kept having this thought that it didn't have to be this way. This spirit of gratitude that this life that I have, it wasn't inevitable.

[4:50] So, over and over again, I found myself praying, thank you, God. I don't deserve this. But here's the thing that surprised me. At almost the exact moment when my gratitude would peak, guilt would show up right on its heels.

Thoughts like, why do I get all this? Why do I get 17 weeks off where everyone else, Chelsea, my ministry colleagues, the rest of my congregation, they're back at the grind on Monday?

And why do I get to travel and rest and play and feast when pastors elsewhere, like in China, they don't get a break? They're fearing raids, right?

Police raids or imprisonment. Why did I get such an amazing family? Such an amazing upbringing? So many resources, so much opportunity. What did I do to deserve any of this life?

And of course, the answer is nothing. So, what I experienced in these many moments of reflection was that somehow the more blessed I felt, the more responsible I felt.

[5:55] My prayers would go something like this. Thank you, God, for fill in the blank. And then almost immediately, so what do you want me to do with it, God? What do you want me to do with it? How do you want me to steward it, share it, redistribute it, multiply it, convert it into fruit?

And like every single thank you would quickly turn around into, but now what am I supposed to produce? And you know, I think that what was underneath that was a fear.

A fear that maybe I would be the kind of servant who received the five talents and yielded zero. The prodigal who wasted his father's estate. I think I live with this constant burden and fear of being someone who has so clearly been given so much and yet has shamefully produced so little.

So little to show for it. And maybe some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. You look at your life and your gratitude turns into guilt in like a millisecond.

You also own a home in the San Francisco Bay Area. You have plenty of savings. Your kids are doing well. You can travel several times a year. And a comfortable retirement is something you're expecting or maybe already enjoying.

[7:02] But then you look around, right? And not everyone is thriving quite like you. There are those who are grieving the loss of their children. Grieving that they're unable to have children.

You read about war and hunger and disease and violence and poverty and displacement and disaster across the globe. And you think, it didn't have to be this way for me. Why did I get this life and not that one?

And perhaps you even meet certain others who have far less than you and yet who seem to be giving, serving, contributing, and producing far more than you. And your gratitude, it starts to become an audit.

Am I doing enough? Giving enough? Contributing enough? Producing enough? In light of everything I've been given, shouldn't I be a better spouse? A better student? A better parent? A better child? A better employee?

A better neighbor? A better Christian? Shouldn't I be living a more worthwhile life? And that became the question of my sabbatical.

[8:02] What does a worthwhile life actually look like? And more painfully, how could I ever even know that I had not wasted what I'd been given? I found myself praying prayers like, God, just tell me.

Just tell me how much money you want me to give. How much time? How much service? How much sacrifice? I'll do it. Just tell me exactly what that number is so I can finally know I'm not wasting my life.

You know, early on in my sabbatical, Jonathan suggested that I start my sabbatical with a solo retreat and then I end with a solo retreat.

So I took a few days completely alone with God at Mount Hermon. Three nights, no kids, no work, no screens, no podcasts, no Wi-Fi, just me, God, my Bible, and my guitar.

And I'd never done anything like that before. So naturally, I tried to optimize it. And I sent this ridiculous email to a bunch of people that I respect saying, you know, hey, what should I pray about?

[9:00] Do you have any prayers that you would suggest to me? Any scriptures you would have me meditate upon? Any spiritual practices I should try out? And then I had a bunch of questions for God like, what are my blind spots?

How can I grow as a leader, as a husband, as a pastor, as a dad, as a friend? What do you want from me in this season and the next season of life and ministry? But basically, what I was seeking was how do I make the most of three days with God so I don't come home empty-handed?

And so one of our deacons, Josh, you know him well, he wrote back to me and basically he rebuked me. He rebuked me hard. It was a long email, all right? And basically, if I could put it in a nutshell, it was bro, chill.

Right? He said, why do you have to get something out of being with God for three days? Why can't being with God be enough? He's enough.

And man, that got me. Even, you know, even my sabbatical had become an Andrew Ong self-improvement project, right?

[10:05] Even time alone with God had become another technique for leveling up. You know, Brene Brown, she has this line where she says that when worthiness, when worthiness is a function of productivity, we lose the ability to pump the brakes.

And she warns of equating productivity and self-worth. And man, that was totally me. I was measuring the worth of my life by its yield. In every moment, I couldn't just be present to the moment, receive it as a gift from God, but I found myself constantly looking for ways to squeeze yield and product and outcome an advantage out of every experience, convinced that a worthwhile life was a life that wasted nothing.

Didn't waste any moment, didn't waste any opportunity, didn't waste any gift from God. And this is why Psalm 131 became such a timely word for my soul.

Because David, he gives us a very different picture of a worthwhile life. Look at what David says in verse 1. This is how he begins the psalm. O Lord, O Yahweh, my heart is not lifted up.

My eyes are not raised too high. I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. Now remember, this is David. The one who slayed Goliath.

[11:25] The warrior, the king, the poet, the musician. One of the most gifted, consequential humans in Israel's history. Psalm 131 isn't saying godly people never dream, never dream big, never attempt great things for God.

David did enormous things. But listen to his posture before God. Listen to his posture before Yahweh, the I am, the maker of heaven and earth.

My heart is not lifted up. I do not have a spirit of self-importance. I'm not going to consider myself better than others.

I'm going to stay in my lane. My eyes are not raised too high. I'm not constantly looking to fulfill my ever-growing desires. My eyes aren't looking to simply satisfy all my fleshly desires.

Then he says, I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. In other words, God is God and David is not. David is simply David.

[12:26] And David is making peace here with that arrangement. God is the creator. David is the creature. And thus, David has limits. God-given limits. Which also means that there are a ton of things that God and only God is responsible for that David isn't.

And David is here stating, he's confessing quite happily, quite peacefully, the reality of his finitude and his limitations as a creature before his creator. Now again, this doesn't mean ambition is wrong or desiring to do great and even seemingly impossible things is wrong.

In the very next Psalm, Psalm 132, actually, David's huge ambition to build a temple for the Lord, it's celebrated. It's honored. In the next Psalm, just over. That was a good, God-honoring ambition.

And yet, if you know the story, God says, no thanks, David. That job's not for you. And then God makes this amazing reversal. After David says, God, let me build you a house, God says, no,

David, I'm going to build you a house.

Isn't that beautiful? David wanted to do something great for God and God told him, no. Not because it was a bad thing. It just wasn't David's thing to do.

[13 : 35] And this was huge for me, that not every good thing that could be done is a good thing God has given me to do. Remember the Apostle Paul's words in Ephesians chapter 2, that we are his workmanship, right?

His masterpieces created in Christ Jesus, yes, for many kinds of good works, but which kinds? Only the kinds he specifically and variously prepared for each of us to do.

So this is what David is surrendering to in Psalm 131. He's not suppressing his ambition, but he's surrendering it to the Lord. The takeaway of this Psalm isn't that God's people should never dream big, take risks, or pursue difficult and extraordinary things for the Lord.

No, the point of Psalm 131 is that they don't have to. They don't have to fulfill those dreams, make returns on those risks, or accomplish great things to earn their worth and to earn peace with God. In the presence of his God, David doesn't feel the need to perform or produce, doesn't feel the need to ascend in status, to impress his deity through this or that great wondrous accomplishment.

[14 : 43] In God's presence, King David resolves to stay in his lane and live within his God-given limits. And I wonder if that's as much a word for you as it has been for me over these past 17 weeks.

These past 17 weeks have allowed me to reckon with my limits. That's a third of a year, right? And it still wasn't enough to get all the stuff done I wanted. I had a whole list of people I wanted to meet up with.

I had 35 heart-to-hearts with just old friends, people I love, people I wanted to catch up with. I still didn't see everyone I wanted to see. Didn't read everything I wanted to read. Didn't accomplish every fitness goal.

Didn't pray everything I wanted to pray. Definitely, my inbox didn't go to zero, all right? 17 weeks was really only enough time for me to discover that I will never have enough time.

At least not if my goal is to do everything that I think is worth doing. See, our culture trains us to experience every limit as a problem waiting for a solution. You're tired?

[15 : 42] Hack your sleep. You're busy, optimize your calendar. You're aging, biohack it. You don't have enough. You don't know enough. Just consume more information. And look, I'm not anti-tech.

I love efficiency. I love getting stuff done. But we need to name and challenge the often unexamined assumption that every limit we face is a negative barrier. An obstacle in the way of us becoming the best versions of ourselves and experiencing the best versions of our lives.

You know, in his book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, Pete Cicero writes that maturity in life is when someone is living joyfully within their God-given limits. And he often likes to say that our limits are our calling.

I love that. Because somewhere along the way, we've started assuming that every limit is an enemy and a problem. But what if it isn't? I love how the theologian Kelly Capic, he puts in his book, *You're Only Human*, he writes this.

Who can have it all? We laugh because it is ludicrous. But even as we chuckle, we plan our next day with the expectation that we can and will excel at our job, spend quality time with our family, renew our bodies through physical fitness, eat healthy meals, do the laundry, and in the middle of all this, we expect to be joyful, patient, interesting, and kind.

[17 : 01] Very few of us lay our heads on the pillow at night and feel that we have conquered the day. It just doesn't happen, does it? Often we find ourselves feeling that we are failing at everything. Instead of crushing the day, we feel crushed by it.

Trying to have it all, all at once, sets us up for frustration and failure. Many of us fail to understand that our limitations are a gift from God and therefore good.

See, if we continue to tie our productivity to our sense of worth, every limit we run up against will feel like a moral failure, right? A mark, a stain on our identity.

But that's a losing game from the start. It's a guaranteed ticket to burnout on the hamster wheel.

God never intended for us to be limitless. And yet we so often try to live with limited limits.

Some of you remember Jesse Robinson. He came to preach here a couple weeks ago. He's become a really good friend of mine. We try to get together every month or so to pray, to confess sin, to encourage each other. And, you know, I was just sharing with him all that I've been

processing throughout my sabbatical.

[18:07] Confessing to him how stingy I still find myself to be with my time. And it's because I have this inner belief that if I just had more time, I could accomplish so much more.

This or that, right? And he helped me realize that, man, not only is that such a privileged thing to believe about myself. He often, like, calls me out for being such an ableist, right?

And he pointed out that, wow, this guy, he feels like his only obstacle is time. That's his biggest problem and obstacle, just not having the time he wants to accomplish all he seeks to do.

But he also, he called me out. He got me to see that my belief, that if I just had enough time, I'd get everything I wanted done. He said, man, that sounds pretty close to godlike omnipotence.

Like, somehow, the only thing standing between me and a perfect me, perfect life, is six more hours a week. But that's a lie.

[19:08] Our limits are not defects for a human being. Limits are a feature, not a bug. And maybe instead of always praying, God, why can't I do all these things? What if we started praying, thank you, God, that I don't have to?

Because if a worthwhile life means doing everything, every worthwhile thing, then a worthwhile life is an impossible life.

And that cannot be what God wants for us, his children. Constant anxiety over our limits. No, he wants us to discover the liberty within our limits.

But the question is how, right? Because it's one thing to say intellectually, okay, I'm finite, I have limits. But it's another thing to be emotionally okay with that, right?

Like when the limits actually start to limit us when we run out of time and energy and access and money and ability. How do we not become restless and anxious? Well, that's where verse two comes in.

[20:07] David says, but I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother. Like a weaned child is my soul within me.

That first word's super important. But. He says, I don't occupy myself with things too great and marvelous for me, but I have instead calmed and quieted my soul.

Now, if that was all David said, honestly, that'd be pretty annoying. Like, okay, David, just turn that anxiety off, flip that switch, right? Enter calm mode, sure sounds nice.

But David's not giving us a program or practice. He's not giving us some spiritual technique. He's giving us a picture and a posture of a child resting with its mother.

Notice what he doesn't picture. He doesn't picture a king looking at all his accomplishments and saying, a pretty good career. Top 5% ancient Near Eastern monarch. I'll take that. His soul is not quiet because he's finally determined that his output is acceptable.

[21:12] No, he just pictures a child basically doing nothing. Nothing but being held. Specifically, a weaned child. Because see, a nursing baby experiences mom largely through what mom provides.

Me hungry. I cry. Mommy comes. Gives me milk. Problem solved. There's almost a transactional nature to it, right? Hit the cry button and the human milk machine produces.

But the weaned child in Psalm 131 is resting with mom when no milk is coming. Mom has become more than what mom provides.

Her presence itself is precious. And I think this is one of God's invitations to me during sabbatical. Andrew, can time with me be more than technique for becoming a better pastor, better dad, husband, and Christian?

Can my presence be your portion? Can you come and rest and receive simply as my son and nothing less or more? God's been awakening me to see that maybe the picture of a worthwhile life isn't a life with an impressive ROI relative to all my privilege.

[22:22] Maybe it's a life lived in the embrace of the Father. And so this became my mantra throughout the sabbatical. Sonship before stewardship. Receptivity before productivity.

Not because stewardship doesn't matter. Not because productivity is bad. But because if I get that order wrong and make stewardship the way I prove myself as worthy, as a worthy son, then I've totally missed the heart of God.

And isn't this what Jesus shows us in the story of the prodigal son, right? The younger son takes his inheritance, genuinely throws it away, wastes it. He squanders his father's estate. And he finally comes home rehearsing the speech.

Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son because I wasted it. Therefore, treat me like one of your hired servants. I blew it as a son. So let me come back as a worker. Give me something to do. Let me pay you back. Let me prove that I can still produce some value around here. But the father refuses to entertain that conversation.

[23 : 25] He runs like a fool. He embraces his prodigal son. Gives him a robe, ring, sandals. Slaughters the fattened calf. The kid who has already wasted so much, he gets more.

He gets more from his father. Can you imagine? In the eyes of the surrounding villagers and surely in the eyes of his older brother, what a waste.

What a waste. How could the father waste all of that on his wasteful son? Wouldn't all those gifts be better invested in someone more like the older son?

The older son had a far better resume, a far better track record. He stayed. He worked. He obeyed. All he ever hoped for was just a young goat to celebrate a little party with his friends.

Way better value there, right? But the problem was, he too was keeping a ledger. The same way his younger brother, ashamed, tail between his legs, approached their father when he offered to pay his dad back as a hired servant, neither brother wanted to be sons in loving relationship with their father.

[24 : 29] Neither brother wanted to be simple recipients of the father's kindness and generosity. Both simply pursued an economic, earnings-based relationship with their father where the inputs and the outputs were clear and mechanically standardized.

The younger brother wanted to pay back what he believed he owed, and the older brother wanted to seize what he believed he was owed. And reflecting on this sonship theme, you know, I realized that in my gratitude turned to guilt, in my appreciation turned to anxiety, in my desire to prove to myself that all the gifts that had been lavished upon me were not a waste, in my desire to prove that my life was worthwhile.

I realized that I had been putting stewardship ahead of sonship, making productivity the condition for receptivity. I realized that deep down, I didn't want to be that younger brother celebrated by a father everyone else in the village probably viewed as foolish for wasting more on me.

No, rather than, you know, awkwardly enjoying the undeserved, extravagant, fattened calf feast out of the goodness and generosity of my father's heart, I realized that deep down, I preferred to be the older brother, with a solid resume, content with earning a small young goat party with my friends, something I actually earned.

Lest anyone think that I've wasted my gifts, my potential, and my life. And so just like both brothers, I'd forgotten what the father was trying to give me. A relationship.

[26 : 05] An identity. Sonship. Himself. Parents, you know, just imagine, right? Imagine you found the perfect Christmas gift for your child. You've been waiting weeks to see their face light up when they open it.

And finally, the day comes, they rip off that wrapping paper. Their face lights up. Their eyes get huge. You can tell that they love it. It's a home run. But then, just as quickly, you see them glance at the price tag.

And they're like, Mom and Dad, this was crazy expensive. Let me go run to my room, grab my calculator, and develop a stewardship plan so I can maximize the return on what you paid for this gift to me.

You see them scurry up to their room, right? They get a notepad out. They start scribbling. You can hear them thinking, hmm, how do I make sure I get every penny out of what Mom and Dad spent on me? Let me prove to them and everyone else that buying this for me was worth it.

As a parent, you'd be like, what is wrong with you? Come downstairs. Enjoy it. I gave it to you because I love you. I wanted to enjoy you enjoying it.

[27 : 15] And see, this embarrassingly is close to what I was doing with God. Thank you, God, for sabbatical. Thank you, God, for the whole of my life. Now, let me make sure I can grow enough, I can be righteous enough to be worth all that you've given to me.

I was missing the very thing I hope you hear me preach regularly that when you are a child of God, there is nothing you need to prove. And that's not to say that waste is fine, waste is acceptable.

The younger son really did squander things terribly. Grace doesn't mean our wastefulness has no cost. But here what grace does mean is that the father does not wait until the son has produced

enough to restore him to sonship.

Sonship comes first and then his life changes. The son receives before he responds. He responds. Why?

Because he's seen someone pay an incredible cost. The father in Luke 15, he runs down the road, throws a feast, but it costs him. His robe, his ring, his sandals, the fattened calf, perhaps even his reputation with the puzzled onlookers watching him embrace and honor his wasteful son.

[28 : 29] It's also costing the older son as well. Who did that fattened calf belong to? Who is that robe, that ring? Who are those sandals going to go to? The older son. Who stood to inherit all that? Bringing sons home as sons and not as servants, it is costly.

But it's what our father does. It's what the son, our great older brother Jesus, has done. What he was willing to do to pay for us. And though it might even seem wasteful, that God the father and Christ the son would pay the cost of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

To adopt wasteful, undeserving, prodigal enemies into the family of God. To put their sins to death in his body. Conquer the forces of evil, death.

To put away the curse. What many would deem as wasteful. The good news of the gospel is that God has deemed it worth it. What many deemed as foolish and shameful.

The son of God on a cross. God deemed as beautiful and glorious. For just as the father lifted up his robe to run the distance toward his younger son.

[29 : 33] And just as the father put aside his pride to go plead with the older son to come join the fattened calf celebration. Our triune God pursues us. Runs toward us.

Makes costly provision for us to come home. And not as, you know, first and foremost productive servants and stewards under his management. But first and foremost as receptive sons and daughters of a good and benevolent king.

See, the gospel says Christ did not give himself because the father looked down the road.

Calculated our future return and productivity. And then he decided we would eventually justify the investment.

He gave himself just to bring his children home. And bringing his children home is not a waste. At least not to him. Grace always bears fruit.

Sons and daughters will serve. They will give. They will sacrifice. They will create and build and work. But we aren't paying daddy back for our Christmas presents. We aren't proving that we are worthy of his grace. We respond because we've already been received.

[30 : 31] Because stewardship is the fruit of sonship and not the price of it. And that, that's why the soul can finally become quiet. This is the only thing that can truly calm and quiet the soul of a human, right?

Of a limited human being. When my productivity no longer has to carry my identity. When my limitations no longer have to function as failures. I can simply receive what God gives me.

And as a son, begin to discover the work he's prepared me to do. And I can leave the rest to him.

All the great and marvelous things. Because when you're living within the Father's love, that's when you finally can live within your God-given limits.

When you know you're being held by God, that's when you can stop trying to hold everything together yourself. And that's the gospel. Now to conclude in Psalm 131.

David says in verse 3. Oh Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. And man, I love that. See, this isn't just some throwaway line at the end of the psalm.

[31 : 35] I love this ending because what it's saying is that Psalm 131 isn't commending some, you know, just occasional sabbatical spirituality. It's not every seven years, take 17 weeks off and briefly become a weaned child.

No, this posture of being a weaned child, it's an everyday posture. From this time forth and forevermore. It's for each of us, tomorrow and every day after that. But the question is, will we carry that posture?

Are we able to carry that posture into our ordinary lives? And I got tested on this, this very week.

Honestly, this week I struggled to get back into the rhythm of preparing a sermon. This past Friday, man, I had the girls all day.

And the sermon was hardly even started. And as the morning went on, I could feel myself getting irritated. Piano practice taking too long. Chores taking too long.

They kept interrupting me when I was trying to listen to podcasts and audiobooks, you know, in between driving them places. Don't they know daddy's fishing for some brilliant insight for his sermon on Sunday?

[32:38] It was like a miserable morning. And I was even more, you know, disappointed in myself. Because it was like, man, after 17 weeks of sabbatical, all it takes is one sermon I need to deliver.

I'm not even officially back yet, but I'm already losing my patience. It's, I'm already finding my way back into stinginess about my time all over again. Is that how the next seven years is going to be before my next sabbatical?

Will I just continue seeing my daughters as obstacles to the Andrew Ong optimization project? Or will I practice what I'm hoping to preach?

And take up the posture of a weaned child with a calm and quieted spirit. Embrace my limitations. Open myself up to receiving rather than producing.

And be a dad informed by the fact that I'm also a son to our good father in heaven. Will I be a dad who's also a son to our father in heaven rather than a dad who's a slave to my own self-improvement project?

[33:36] So by God's grace, I tried, I calmed and quieted my soul. And I chose to do the least productive thing I could think of. Something that would definitely not help my sermon at all.

We went outside. We played basketball. We dribbled balls. We ran around. We played silly games. I rebounded all their bricks. And then I took them out to get Italian ice and custard.

We just sat there. We ate slowly. Slowly. And we just talked. And we laughed. And I do realize the irony here that I'm using this experience in the sermon.

Alright? I realize I'm doing that right now. Don't hate. But if the reason that hour was worthwhile is simply that it became useful to my sermon, yeah, I totally have missed the point.

But hitting the brakes and surrendering to my limits, being a dad in the presence of my daughters and of my father in heaven, I recognize it was good in and of itself.

[34:39] Wasting time, being silly with my girls, just bouncing balls, tossing them into hoops, eating cold dessert, right? They didn't need to serve some grand, efficient strategy for growth and development.

Those hours with my girls didn't have to become anything else in order to be worthwhile. And that didn't mean the sermon no longer mattered. It didn't mean that work, stewardship, responsibility, productivity suddenly became wicked, evil things.

The sermon still had to get written. And then, the question was whether I could return to that work without asking the work to justify my life and be my righteousness.

And I think that's exactly where verse 3 takes us. Oh, Israel, hope not in yourself, not in your circumstances. Oh, Israel, like a weaned child in the embrace of its mother, is there a hope in the Lord?

And that's something you can do from this time forth and forevermore. Because eventually, the weaned child, it does have to get up from its mother's lap. Eventually, a sabbatical is over.

[35:45] Eventually, I go back to work. But that doesn't mean I have to leave that embrace behind. Tomorrow, there will be deadlines and responsibilities for all of us.

Emails to respond to, kids to parent, projects to complete. Psalm 131 isn't calling us away from responsibility, but it is inviting us to live our responsibilities from somewhere different.

From the Father's calm and restful embrace. From sonship before stewardship. From a posture of receptivity before productivity. From the settled knowledge that before I accomplish anything for my Father, I already belong to Him.

The One who gave everything to call me His own. So, in light of Psalm 131, we can be ambitious without pretending to be limitless. We can work hard without needing our work to justify our identities.

We can receive God's gifts without immediately turning every gift into another test of whether we're worthy. The glory of the gospel is that there is a God who invites His limited and even His wasteful children to experience His calming presence like a weaned child in the embrace of its mother.

[36:54] That's God's word to us, Christ Church. Oh, Christ Church, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Let's pray. Lord, I think Spurgeon was right.

One of the shortest psalms to read. Probably takes the longest to learn. Lord, we thank you for the foolishness of the Father who seems to waste so much upon the Son.

Oh, Lord, would that be beautiful? Would that be good news to us, Lord God? That you're that kind of a father. A prodigal father, even.

And would we delight in the way that you lavish your grace upon us? Would we delight in the reality that we don't have to earn our identity with you as children of God?

We thank you that Jesus has paid it all. Our older brother has gone before us. The triune God has paid the cost to bring His children home.

[38:09] So do we love to be home in your embrace, in your presence. And would that make us the calmest, most peaceful, most rested people, oh God.

Showing to the world a better way of hoping in you from this time forth and forevermore. In Jesus' name, amen.