

Who Are We: Going

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[0 : 0 0] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Mark chapter 1, we're going to be in verses 16 through 20, and as you're turning there, I wanted to briefly update you on what we're doing this morning. So we press pause on our larger series in Genesis for a few weeks to explore the biblical concept of discipleship.

We just revealed our new mission statement a couple weeks ago. Trinity Grace Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples in Athens and beyond for the glory of God.

So with the emphasis being on disciples who make disciples, we wanted to be sure we knew what we're talking about whenever we talked about what a disciple is.

So in this series, we've basically distilled it to three things. Disciples called, disciples growing, and a disciple is going.

[1 : 1 0] So this morning, we're going to focus on the third aspect of discipleship, going. So we'll read from Mark 1, 16 through 20.

We'll give special attention to verse 17. And just so you know, this is an atypical message. We don't preach like this usually. We'll be springboarding from this into other passages throughout Scripture.

Usually we stick in one text, but today is unique. But this is the word of God, Mark 1, 16 through 20.

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

And Jesus said to them, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

[2 : 1 4] And going on a little farther, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who were in their boat, mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

May God bless the preaching and the hearing of his word. Well, when I was in college, I was a film major. And at one point during a school break, I joined a team to help make a short film.

My role on the team? Auxiliary guy. That was my role. That included things that people don't usually think about, like getting the lights set up and tracks for the cameras, throwing sawdust in the air when a gun would go off for special effects.

That was my job. So basically, all of my contributions were off camera. Except for one beloved cameo appearance.

I got to be an extra in a party scene. I was party guy number seven. That was my other title. Party guy number seven.

[3 : 34] And ultimately, that scene would only be about 20 seconds long total in the final cut, with my face featured for a total cumulatively of two glorious seconds.

Yes. But I was in the movie. I was excited about that. So imagine with me for a moment what it would be like if I went home after the project, and I contacted all of my friends and my family and I announced to them that I had just finished shooting my first movie.

Oh, I couldn't wait. What if I got posters made with my face on it? Or maybe I rent a theater, roll out the red carpet, do a big event to premiere my movie.

My movie. My movie. Wouldn't that be something? Could you imagine? Could you imagine the shock on their face when they sat there and waited and waited and waited until the third quarter of the movie?

And my face pops up for two seconds and I go, there it is! It's me! Here's my part! My movie! And I get real excited about it. Can you imagine the bewilderment?

[4 : 46] If I did that, why would that just sit so wrong with people? Wasn't it true that I was in the movie? Wasn't I in the story?

Of course. Of course I was truly in the story. So what's the problem here? The problem is that it was not a story about me. I had a supporting role in a much bigger story.

I was part of a team. Each one of us working together in our small ways to accentuate the main character in a much bigger story.

If I did not see myself in relation to the bigger story I was a part of, I would have a distorted view of my role and my actions would be bogus.

That'd be crazy. Instead of rightly using my few seconds to highlight the main story, I'd be lost in a meaningless, self-focused side story.

[5 : 55] In a much greater way, we are a part of a bigger story. You and I are embedded in God's story.

But if our lives are isolated from this bigger story, we risk being lost in a meaningless, self-focused side story.

Christianity, apart from Christ, his purposes and his people will not make sense.

If you try to locate your purpose in life apart from his story, you will engage, maybe even passionately, in dead-end pursuits that will eventually just fizzle out into eternity.

The call to discipleship will be foolish. We will be most to be pitied. It will be foolish, particularly the call to go and to tell others.

[6 : 59] But our text this morning is calling us to step into the bigger story and to use our two seconds of screen time of life for Christ, his purposes and his people.

Jesus Christ has a mission for his people. In this story, all disciples of Jesus Christ are called, they are to grow, and they are to go.

As we embrace our role in this story, we'll begin to find the joy of new life, and we'll increasingly find that we want to tell other people about it.

So the main point for us this morning is quite simply, go and proclaim the good news of great joy in Jesus Christ, who loves us and is with us to the end, while entrusting the results to God.

Go and proclaim the good news of great joy in Jesus Christ, who loves us and is with us to the end, while entrusting the results to God.

[8 : 10] So we're going to explore this with four questions related to going with the good news. Four questions I want to pose. What is the good news?

Who proclaims the good news? What is the posture of proclaiming the good news? And how do we take the good news?

So first, what is the good news? When Jesus called out, follow me, Jesus beckoned these men to leave behind their professions, their possessions, their dreams, ambitions, family, family business, friends, safety, security, the list goes on.

He called them to leave everything and not look back. So in a very real sense, the call of Christ was a call to die to their old lives.

How could he call for something so extreme? And why, if the call was so costly, would these men so readily drop everything and go?

[9 : 28] I don't know about you, but for me, this call can sound very intimidating when I start to think about it. Maybe you're like me and you wonder if you'd be willing to leave everything like this.

But before you do that and you go there, we've got to pause and we've got to pull up before we start to question whether we are strong enough or we are dedicated enough to do something so extreme like this.

There is much more to the story. So we need to consider who is calling in this text. Why is Jesus even here on the shoreline?

Who is it that's calling? Well, the story of the Bible began long before this moment with a creator whose creation rebelled against him.

We committed, mankind committed treason against the king of the universe. Our sins separated us from him and we lugged the guilt of our condemnation on our shoulders.

[10 : 39] We were lost and cut off from the only one that could bring us life without hope of saving ourselves. I was reminded recently of an older movie starring Robert De Niro called The Mission.

Maybe you've seen it. The movie is based in colonial South America where De Niro is depicted as a slave trader who makes his living capturing and enslaving tribal people and then selling them to nearby plantations.

So even though he has wealth and he has power he gets into trouble when he learns that his fiancée is having an affair with his brother. So in a fit of rage he kills his own brother.

And so as the story unfolds De Niro essentially spirals into depression because he can't escape the weight of his guilt. He feels that he must really suffer for his sins but that guilt just continually haunts him.

It's there. De Niro is sentenced by the court to serve as a helper with establishing a Catholic mission in the jungles amongst the same people he used to kidnap to make his fortune.

[12 : 03] So even though it appeared to be a merciful sentence De Niro knew it was ultimately a death sentence because he would eventually stand before the very tribe's people he had exploited but this time he would be the defenseless one.

There is a very moving scene of De Niro tying all the supplies for the mission into this big bundle in a net and then he starts dragging it into the jungle on the way to his death sentence.

And the weight of the bundle is really intended to be this visual metaphor of his guilt. And with every step he becomes more and more and more exhausted and he knows that he will soon stand before his executioners.

So after dragging the bundle of supplies into the depths of the jungle they finally arrive on a cliffside near a large waterfall.

De Niro is utterly depleted. He's covered in mud with no energy to continue. And then suddenly the tribe's people come out of the jungle from all around.

[13 : 30] And they circle around De Niro as he's kneeling down on the ground and draw their spears. They know exactly who this guy is as soon as they see him.

One of the tribesmen pulls out a knife and then begins to approach him while he's kneeling on the ground. De Niro closes his eyes and lowers his head awaiting what he knows is the just judgment for all of his sins against these people.

And while the camera remains tight on his face we suddenly hear the sawing sound of the knife. And a split second later there is the sound of a great splash.

De Niro lifts his head up in shock. He's not dead. He looks around and he's trying to make sense of what just happened. The tribesmen had used his knife to cut the ropes of the bundle and then rolled the entire burden off of the cliff into the waterfall below.

You see, the very ones who had every right to execute this man chose instead to forgive him and cast the weight of his guilt off of the cliff never to be seen again.

[14 : 53] Oh, my friends, in a much greater way God, the very one who has every right to justly execute us chose instead to forgive us.

When we could do nothing God acted. In his mercy God sent God sent his son his perfect son to die on a cross as a sufficient sacrifice for all those who have placed their trust in him alone.

In this way, God, the just judge of all the earth takes out his knife and saws off the burden of your guilt and my guilt past, present, and future and he places it on the outstretched arms of Jesus casting our sins as far as the east is from the west on the cross never to be seen again.

Praise the Lord. This is how God can execute justice on our sin without executing us for our sin. So, the call we see here to Jesus does not begin with asking how much we are willing to sacrifice but to see first the one who was sacrificed in our place.

Before being sent, we must see and savor Jesus as the sent one who came to us. Even his name, Jesus, means Yahweh saves.

[16 : 43] Emmanuel, we'll talk about this at Christmas, God with us. God has been acting. God has been moving.

God has been the one pursuing. So, when we follow Christ, we die to our old story of living independently from God and instead we are joined to a new story of life in Jesus Christ.

So, what is this good news? Here's my simple answer. The good news is the joyful message of God that leads us to salvation.

That's the good news. It's a joyful message that leads us to salvation. But it's not enough to simply know these truths. This is only good news if it is received through faith.

Have you responded to this good news? have you placed your trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Have you received his life and death as your own?

[17 : 52] So, as he did for the first disciples, Jesus is right now standing on the shoreline of your heart and he's calling out, follow me! He's calling you into relationship with himself.

And this relationship will change everything. Commentator David Garland wisely noted, Disciples are not those who simply fill pews at worship, fill out pledge cards, attend an occasional Bible study, and offer to help in the work of the church now and then.

They are not merely eavesdroppers and onlookers. When one is hooked by Jesus, one's whole life and purpose in life are transformed.

Following Jesus changes everything. It changes what we're living for and who we are living for. He promises to make us into fishers of men.

In other words, the Christian life is turning away from ourselves in order to follow Jesus and make other followers of Jesus.

[19 : 07] For a disciple to make another disciple, the message of the gospel has to be communicated so that a person can move from unbelief to belief, from non-disciple to disciple, from not following to following.

It's the message of the gospel that does this. But was this call to be fishers of men just for the disciples in our text?

Or if it is for the church today, is it primarily for the pastors? Or maybe the ones that are just really outgoing? Or maybe those gifted in evangelism?

Is it just for those people who proclaim the good news? Point number two, who proclaims the good news? Well, Jesus said to the first disciples, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

This was at the beginning of his ministry. But do you remember what he said at the very end of his earthly ministry to these same guys? In Matthew 28, 19-20, to book in what he says here, he says this, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

[20 : 35] And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. So that begs the question, when's the end of the age? Are we supposed to be doing this right now?

When is the end of the age? That's how long his promise endures. Hebrews 1, 1-2 says this, long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these, what does it say?

Last days. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. So according to this and other scriptures, the last days began with the first coming of Jesus, Jesus, and they will conclude with the return of Jesus.

So we're in this window right now of the last days. The end of the age is still to come, but we are in the last days right now. The end of the age will come.

That will be the conclusion of the last days. The end of the age. So the proclamation of the gospel was intended to continue way beyond those original disciples at the Great Commission.

[21 : 58] Way beyond that. We're still waiting for the end of the age. In fact, Jesus himself prays in John 17, verse 20. This is his prayer for future believers that come from the proclamation of the good news.

He says this, I do not ask for these only, talking about his disciples right there in the room with him. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

Who will believe? As the New Testament unfolds, we continue to see the good news of the gospel go forward through the proclamation of his people.

And this is not limited to church leaders either. In fact, we looked at this text a couple weeks ago, Ephesians 4, 11 to 12. It tells us explicitly that evangelism is not a gift that some believers get and others don't.

It's not something that Chris gets and Cindy doesn't get. Joel gets. Megan doesn't get. It doesn't work like that. It's not a gift that some get.

[23 : 11] rather, this points us to the reality that church leaders, an evangelist, is a leader who mobilizes the rest of the church for the purpose of evangelism.

The evangelist isn't just the one doing evangelism, it's the one that's mobilizing the people to go out and to do evangelism. He gave the apostles, the prophets, here it is, the evangelists, the shepherds and the teachers.

Why did he give them? Why did he give the evangelists? To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

So part of what our call is, is to equip so that you can do the work of building up the body of Christ. And part of that is joining unbelievers into belief, taking the gospel to people and gathering them into the bride of Christ.

So the leader's role is to teach and to encourage all disciples in the discipline of evangelism. Not the gift, the discipline of evangelism, to proclaim the good news.

[24 : 19] It is a discipline much like reading the Bible. Have you grown in that? Have you learned ways to do that? Have you sharpened that? Have you had people help you along with that?

This is in the same vein so that it's something that all Christians can grow in. We can grow in this. That's good news. And that's what we're seeing happening all throughout the New Testament.

In Acts 18, we see a Jew named Apollos being helped and taught by a couple named Aquila and Priscilla. Maybe you've heard this couple before.

They sit down with them. Aquila and Priscilla are just church people, ordinary folk using their home to bless the church. Maybe kind of like a community group leader. They're the ones that are helping Apollos and then later we see the same guy, Apollos, named several times as a co-laborer with Paul, proclaiming the same good news that changed his life.

Ordinary people, not just Paul, ordinary people proclaiming the gospel, bringing transformation, something we can all grow in. So who is intended to proclaim the good news?

[25 : 32] here's my answer. All disciples, all disciples of Jesus are intended to grow and go in the discipline of proclaiming the good news to those who are yet to believe.

All disciples of Jesus are intended to grow and go in the discipline of proclaiming the good news to those who are yet to believe. So what should our posture be doing this?

Point three, question number three, what is the posture of proclaiming this good news? There may be hurdles in your heart, as they are in mine, to proclaim the good news.

Maybe there's fear of others, others, it's a big one for me, or you feel like you don't know the right answers, maybe you just don't know unbelievers, you're not around unbelievers.

These are hurdles, not walls, that we can talk through and with God's help jump over. We can grow, we can change, we can do this, we can learn, we can grow in this discipline with God's help.

[26 : 56] Using people like you and me to proclaim the good news actually highlights God's power. God was not scanning the lineup for the MVPs to help his evangelism team.

That's not what he was doing. No, he picked the scrawniest, most worthless player on the team and said, I want that one. God's power.

That's what he does with us. He picked the sinners, the sick, the poor, the needy, the unimpressive. Why?

So there'd be no doubt. It's not their strength, but his strength working in spite of them, not because of them, but in spite of them. He's even more glorious. Look at this wonderful text.

I'm not just making this up. This is from God himself. First Corinthians is for our encouragement, for consider your calling, brothers. Take a moment, consider your calling, brothers.

[27 : 59] Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth, but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

And because of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Oh, I boasted the Lord this morning that he saved me when I was lost and confused. What about you? I didn't have anything to bring to the game plan except for my sin.

And he came for me. God works through us in spite of us because he loves us, not because he needs us.

[29 : 14] He loves us. He loves us. The result is that we experience his kindness in accomplishing his purposes through us, and he gets even more glory because of it.

All praise must be given to him for this kind of work. So the first posture that we need to see characterizing the proclamation of the good news is humility. Humility.

It should characterize our bringing, our proclaiming of the gospel. Second, in the movie, The Mission, when De Niro is on his knees, he is shocked to find that number one, he is not dead, and number two, his executioner has thrown his burden off of the waterfall.

There is this long pregnant pause as De Niro attempts to make sense of what just happened, and then he begins to weep.

There's nothing more to be done. He's been forgiven by the one he's forsaken. And he is just swept into the glory of forgiveness when he realizes what has happened.

[30 : 41] This is truly amazing grace. I should be dead. He's overcome with joy. How much more for those who have had all their debts canceled at the cross?

Often, a lack of motivation to proclaim the gospel stems not from motivation, but from joylessness in the Lord. Consider the man who is delivered from a legion of demons.

After he's delivered, he begs to be a follower of Jesus. him. Did he take him home? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him?

Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? Did he take him? But what does the man do? He doesn't just tell his family.

Mark 5 tells us what happened. He went back. The instructions were, go tell your family. This is what he did. He went home away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis. Decapolis, deca meaning ten, polis meaning city.

[31 : 45] There were ten cities in this area. He goes to this ten city region to proclaim how much Jesus had done for him and everyone marveled. His joy in the Savior led to his proclamation.

His joy. Do you have joy in your Savior this morning? Maybe the best thing that you can do to grow in your evangelism is just to study God's kindness towards you.

What undeserved grace have you received as you look back this last week, month, years, lifetime? Count them up. And consider it joy.

Feed the flame of your joy in the Lord. In addition to humility and joy, we should also have confidence in our proclamation of the good news.

That may sound contradictory at first because I just talked about humility. But confidence, if it's anchored in God's promises, is a great thing.

[32 : 54] Confidence in God's promises. We believe that the Bible teaches God's complete, utter sovereignty over salvation. And we believe that God uses human means to accomplish his sovereign purposes in salvation.

Including our proclamation of the good news. God ordains it. He is author of it. He is sovereign over it. And yet it's us doing it.

Consider these words from Jesus in John 10, verse 16. I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

I must bring them also. And they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. The fold that he's talking about here are his followers from a Jewish background.

However, he is saying that there are other sheep that are not of this fold. In other words, there are Gentiles out there.

[34 : 04] Non-Jews. And those Gentile sheep belong to Jesus too. He says they will listen to my voice.

That's future tense. We'll listen. How will these Gentiles all over the earth hear his voice and join the flock of Christ's followers?

By hearing the good news and believing. By hearing the good news and believing. We can have confidence that there will be believers, as Revelation spells out, from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

That's the guarantee. He's saying, I've ordained it. Sovereign stamp of approval. Now go get them. Go get my sheep. I will call them through you.

It's confidence building. It bolsters my heart. What's more, Jesus promises something extraordinary in Matthew 28. Before he tells his disciples to go and make disciples, he says the verse prior, Matthew 28, 18.

[35 : 11] All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Jesus is the one saying this. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

The business magazine Forbes used to compile an annual list of the world's most powerful people in the world. People were ranked based on three factors.

Number of people under their influence. Access to financial resources. And influence on world events. So at the top of the list, as you can imagine, there are people like the leader of China, the world's most populated country, 1.4 billion people.

And also the second largest economy. Huge influence on world events. Jeff Bezos, chairman and CEO of Amazon, who has a net worth of around \$160 billion in 2018.

Powerful, authoritative, influential resources at their disposal. Do you see what Jesus is saying here? Jesus says that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him.

[36 : 22] There's no higher power than him. Putin must bow. Trump must bow. Biden must bow. Bezos must bow. All of these powers are inferior to his power.

The one who made all of these things. But then he says to his disciples, therefore, you go.

I have all this power, therefore, you go. What more confidence do we need than that of the supreme authority over the universe?

Do you want to be more bold? Meditate less on your inability and more on his strength. I think that would help us.

Meditate less on your inability and more on his strength. Last posture of our proclamation of the good news should be characterized by faith.

[37 : 23] If we only have two seconds on the screen in the unfolding story of God, then we can trust that God has been working before us and will continue to work after us.

We are not the Savior, but we can point to the Savior. So the pressure to convert a person is not on us.

We can step into the stream of God's work and then entrust the results to him. I love this verse. 1 Corinthians, the same guy, Apollos, is mentioned here.

Paul says, I planted, Apollos watered, but then God's the one that brings the growth. God gave the growth. So neither he who plants or he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

There is planting and watering. It didn't do that without the planting and watering. God wills that we do the planting and the watering and then watch him bring the growth. Bring the growth.

[38 : 29] He does it. We do not know who will respond to the proclamation of the good news. And that's a really good thing, in my opinion. Because we'd probably be tempted to think that certain people would be more likely to respond than other people.

Instead, God gives us a broad promise that all his people will respond. All that belong to him will respond. And then he doesn't tell us who those people are.

So that we will sow the seed indiscriminately. Broad as we can to as many people as we can.

In other words, it's not for us to pick and choose who are the best candidates for salvation. Have you put up barriers against certain kinds of people in our community?

In your heart. Are there barriers separating you from the proclamation of the good news towards certain people in our community? If so, what leads you to believe that they are so unsavable?

[39 : 43] Is his arm too short? I want to call us to faith. God is able to save to the uttermost.

To the uttermost. There's none too far from his grasp. Maybe it's fear that holds you back. One of the things that's really helped me is to remember that Jesus has not called me to follow a road map that lays every detail out.

Jesus has called me to himself. Following Jesus is a call into relationship. I don't know the outcome of every moment.

I can't calculate every move perfectly. I don't think we were meant to. Christianity is not about following Christ. And Christianity is about following Christ and trusting him in every moment.

faith is about following Christ. Including the scary ones. Including ones who don't know what the outcome is going to be. Faith is built by stepping out in dependence and experiencing his provision over and over again.

[40 : 58] faith is about following Christ. We don't know every step of where we'll be going. But we know who we'll be going with. That's why Paul wrote this wonderful verse to come back to in Galatians 2.20.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live. But Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh. I live by faith. Not in myself but in the Son of God.

Why? Because he loved me and he gave himself for me. I can bank on it. I can bank on it. So what is the posture of proclaiming the good news?

This is my answer. Disciples should proclaim the good news with humility, joy, confidence, and faith. So how do we do it?

[42 : 05] How do we take the good news? Mac Stiles wrote an excellent book entitled Evangelism, How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus.

How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus. Mac captures a few wonderful truths in that subtitle. All the members of a local church participate in proclaiming the gospel.

In some ways, they are built in the practice of just coming together as a local church. We do things like preaching and praying, singing, giving, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

But the whole church is also intended to proclaim the good news when we scatter out into the community. I want to highlight a distinction between the church as an institution when the people, like right now, corporately gather, and the people of the church when they individually scatter.

Same people, but two different modes. Corporately gathered and individually scattered. You can kind of think of this, this is what popped in my head, like an anthill.

[43 : 20] It's like an anthill. Ants, if you watch ants, they are incredible when they work together. They gather together with a specific group and continually build together through all of their different roles.

However, they also scatter out to different places, sometimes individually and sometimes in smaller groups. They find a good cookie crumb from that cookie day we're going to have.

They work together and pick the whole thing up and carry it back. But they always work together in order to build and beautify the colony. They bring it back to build the colony.

An independent ant wandering around does not exist, in my estimation. In all the nature I have observed, you don't just see an ant just meandering around by himself saying, I don't know what am I going to get into.

I'm looking for some self-fulfillment. What could I do that would make my life more rich? No, that's not what they're doing. That's not how ants, that's not how they operate. They always, always operate, even individually, with an eye toward building into the ant family.

[44 : 29] That's what they're doing out there. So in a similar way, we are intended to gather together and build into one another. That's what we're doing.

But then we are to scatter with intentionality into the places and the people God has entrusted to us. Max Stiles wrote of this distinction, The church's role is not to run programs.

The church should cultivate a culture of evangelism. A culture of evangelism. The members are sent out from the church to do evangelism.

What this does for us, this is my answer to the question, It helps the gathered church institutionally focus on faithfully worshiping God, while the individuals, all of us, fan out to focus on seekers, people who don't know Jesus yet.

That's the distinction there. I think it's helpful. It helps clarify what we're about when we're together and when we scatter. So let me give you some examples of what this might look like.

[45 : 39] At Trinity Grace Church, as an institution gathered, we will focus our corporate gatherings on preaching, praying, singing, giving, baptism, Lord's Supper on Sunday mornings.

That's what we're about. That's what we're going to do. We're not going to stop doing those things. We will provide leadership development opportunities for training future community group leaders, deacons, pastors, and Lord willing, church planters and missionaries.

We want to do that. We hope to leverage our resources for teaching, training, and deploying people into the many good works that we can each do individually as we scatter from this place that brings attention and glory to the gospel.

Good works all over the place. We want to mobilize people for that. But we want to prioritize the spiritual growth and practical care of our members and look to help future church plants by either sending or supporting with both people and resources.

That's what we want to be about. We want to help make more ant colonies. We want more ant hills to establish in a community and then spread out individually.

[47 : 02] So this is going to happen through partnering with our region to help plant other churches. There are two church plants planned in Tennessee within the next couple of years.

Cornerstone Church of Knoxville, the church that planted us, is looking to plant on the north side of Knoxville. And Redeeming Grace, another church that Cornerstone planted. Now they are going to be planting just south of Franklin, kind of in the Columbia Spring Hill area.

We want to support that kind of thing. We want to send money, resources, and even people. If you know people in those areas or you could move there, let's talk about it. We also want to continue supporting work like helping train pastors at the Pastors College in Ethiopia where Walt had the opportunity to go.

As a people individually scattered, we want every member to be thinking intentionally about the places you'll be and the people that you will see. Family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and others.

The diversity and breadth of our reach as individuals scattered into the community is truly amazing. God has given each of us different opportunities through our gifts, our season of life, resources, experiences, even desires.

[48 : 19] So let me just give you a few examples of ways I've seen individuals living intentionally as they scatter. A retired middle school secretary named Barb was at a restaurant and simply asked if she could pray for the waitress.

The waitress opened up and they later met up for coffee. Before long, they began reading the Bible together. Immediately, a couple other friends at the waitress joined the reading. One has since given her life to Jesus.

A college student named Tim grew up as a missionary kid in a Spanish-speaking country and was a really good soccer player. He noticed where there are a lot of Latino immigrants who enjoy playing soccer at the local field.

So he started playing soccer with them to build friendships. Eventually, he invited them to come and watch the Jesus film in Spanish at his home. Next thing you know, around 30 guys are crammed into his living room watching the Jesus film.

Tim had the opportunity to share his testimony and the good news of Jesus Christ in his living room. A former English teacher named Glenn saw that many refugee families were being relocated to an apartment building in his town.

[49 : 23] He went by and asked a few residents if they would like to learn more English and practice speaking with native English speakers. Pretty soon, there was a weekly gathering of 30 to 40 refugees gathering with members from Glenn's church to practice English.

The main texts were the stories from Jesus' life, printed in both English and the refugee's mother tongue. Several refugees gave their lives to Christ over the years. The last one is from a text thread from a guy named Paul interacting with his neighbor.

Paul writes, When I was dredging the pond last year, this neighbor guy wanted some of the dirt. So we were giving him as much as he wanted. And we interfaced a lot of times over the course of that job.

Then I learned he could weld. And I had him do some welding for me. And then we took them a Thanksgiving dessert. And then the other day, he texted this to me. Hey, Paul.

What you been up to? I've been wanting to ask you, what would you say your purpose is? I know it's a random question. I've just been struggling with motivation. And my thoughts always go towards, Why should I be motivated when none of it really matters when you go anyway?

[50 : 33] So I said, let's talk about it. So we had breakfast Saturday. And after hearing him and more discussion, I suggested we let Jesus answer his big questions. And we invited him to look with me at some of Jesus' teaching on purpose for living.

So he wanted to bring his wife in on this. So they came for supper. And we talked about the parable of the rich fool, bigger barns, and what it means to be rich toward God.

They were both very engaged in the parable. He was very, very attentive. And we agreed to get together again. I want to live like this. I want us to be a church that lives like this.

Trinity Grace Church, what gifts, experiences, resources, season of life, desires do you have? Where has God placed you? Who do you rub shoulders with? Let's take some risks for the sake of the gospel as we go out from this place.

Let's go. Let's proclaim the good news of great joy in Jesus Christ, who loves us and is with us to the end while entrusting the results to God.

[51 : 38] Let's pray. Oh, Father, we cling to you and we recognize we are but jars of clay, fragile needing to be held together, weak and unimpressive.

And yet you are the God who selects what is unimpressive to do your most glorious work, to present the treasure of the gospel.

So, Lord, we ask that you bring many, many folks in our community and beyond, even across the earth, to new life in you because simple, weak followers are trusting in an astounding and powerful God.

In whose name we pray. Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. Thank you.