

## Joyful Parenting

Psalm 127

Richard Caldwell, May 27, 2018

Well, good morning. It is a great joy to be here. Believe me when I tell you that when I hear there was a time when our sermons were up on that screen, it's both amazing and humbling. And I pray that the Lord used it for some good. And if He did, of course, that is all owing to His mercy. But it is great to be here today and to meet you.

I want to give the Lord thanks for Quentin and Tanya and their hospitality to me. Got to spend the day yesterday with them. And it was just after the Men's Conference and that was a great blessing to me. They're special people. The opportunity just to spend time talking with them, getting to hear their story and know who they are was encouraging to my heart.

I thank the Lord for your pastor. Getting to meet him and talk to him and meet his family yesterday, I can tell that he's a humble man and he's real. And that's nothing to take for granted. That's a great blessing to this congregation. I'm thankful for his love for the Word of God and I know that has already been a faithful ministry thus far, and so I give the Lord thanks.

And it was a joy being with the men yesterday. And everyone I've met and talked to was so kind and gracious, and that speaks to the Lord's work in this congregation. I give Him thanks.

Music was encouraging in my heart this morning. And Jordan, that last song was beautiful. Thank you for that.

If you would please, join with me in turning to the 127th Psalm. I bring you greetings from Founders Baptist Church in Spring, Texas. And if you wonder where Spring is, just think Houston. That's the way I always direct people to know who we are. Houston's a big place and we're in North Houston. So, we're about 45 minutes from downtown Houston. If you don't know, Houston's a city of about four million plus people. So, it's very large. Larger than that when you can consider the outskirts of Houston, because Houston just seems to keep going. You know, all the way to (if you don't know Texas), but Huntsville and beyond. But our church there is in Spring, and I bring you greetings from our church and from my family.

Psalm 127 is where we are this morning. Let's read again beginning at verse one.

1 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. 2 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. 3 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of a womb a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Let's go to our God together in prayer.

Father in heaven I thank You for Your great mercies to us in Jesus. I thank You that we have life in Your Son. And when I come here, and I meet with brothers and sisters, I am reminded of what we sang about earlier, that indeed Your work is being expressed throughout the nations. And wherever we go in this world and the Gospel has gone, we see Your mighty hand expressed in the changed lives, the redeemed lives that we meet with. And for this, we give You thanks and praise.

We are mindful today Lord that we are but dust. We are amazed not only that you've had mercy upon us, but then in Your great grace, You make use of us. And this is just joyful to our hearts and humbling to our hearts. And it causes us again to look to You and to give You thanks for all the things that You do, making use of instruments that could never explain the work.

We pray now Lord as we open Your word, that You would be our teacher. We know our helplessness before You. We look to You Lord to do the work that only You can do. I pray that Christ would be exalted in our eyes. I pray for anyone listening to me Lord, who doesn't know Jesus, that today might be the day that they cry out from their heart to Your Son and are saved. But for every redeemed person hearing me, Lord, may this be a time of encouragement and upbuilding. Also, Lord, where You would will it, correcting in nature and redirecting our feet onto a right path. And we will thank You for what You do in Jesus' name. Amen.

This is a unique Psalm. It has a statement, it contains a statement about particular blessing. But it also contains the mindset necessary, it teaches us the mindset necessary to see that blessing, and to sense that blessing. So, the Psalm says to us, "Here is a blessing and here at the same time is the mindset that you must have, the world view that you must have if you're going to be able to see that blessing and rejoice in it, sense that blessing. Be thankful for this blessing."

And so, as we open the Psalm together, I have those two goals in mind. My prayer for us is that we would see and sense the blessing that's expressed in the Psalm. But that also means that I'm praying that the Lord would grant to us the mindset, the eyes to see, the world view that enables us to grasp that blessing.

To put it plainly, my prayer today is that we would see the joy that we should have in parenting children. This is a church that has a lot of children. So, a lot of parents are probably listening to me right now. My prayer for you is that you would approach your task as a Christian parent with great joy in your heart. God means for that to be a joyful experience. This journey of raising kids.

I pray that you would enjoy your children. I pray that you would enjoy the experience of raising your children. I pray that you would have joy in your heart as you think about the future prospects of your children, and you sharing in that future with them. And my prayer for us, is that we would all as parents and grandparents (I'm a grandparent as well), that we would have worship in our hearts as we do all of this. That we would enjoy the Lord as we're enjoying our children.

Parenting is meant to be an act of worship; joyful households, joyful parents, joyful marriages,

joyful children. So that we look back on these years that the Lord has given to us, where we look back on these years with warmth in our minds and hearts as we consider what the Lord did in our homes; that we would remember our homes as a place where there was joy, because there was godliness. That's the goal.

But in order to experience that, to have that, there is a mindset necessary for it. And this Psalm gives us that mindset. As we consider it, we're going to consider it under three headings this morning. We're going to talk about the central theme of the Psalm. Then we're going to talk about four examples the Psalmist gives us that illustrate the theme. And then we're going to take the theme and apply it to a subject that's raised in the Psalm to the specific subject of raising children. So, there's a theme expressed. The theme is then illustrated and then the theme illustrated, we're going to apply in the realm of parenting.

What is the central theme of the Psalm? One of the things that strikes you as you read the Psalm (at least it did me), is you wonder how do the first two verses relate to the last three,

1 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. 2 It's 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.

What does that have to do with:

3 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Those last three verses focus on the man's home, his children, the blessing of children. Children are a heritage from God. What does that have to do with those first two verses? Well, there's something that runs, there's a theme that runs throughout all five verses that tie these two things, these two sections together. What is that theme? I think the theme is the sovereignty of God. The theme is God's sovereignty over everything.

I told the men yesterday, you know, the longer I live, the more that I study the Word of God, and I'm privileged to be able to teach the Word of God, the more I am convinced that in addition to God having saved me, the most impactful thing that has ever happened in my life is learning about the sovereignty of God. To see that God is sovereign over everything. It allows every other piece of my life like a puzzle, it allows it all to fit together in my mind and in my affections, when I understand that God is sovereign.

Or to state that negatively, I could say this, I think. One of the things I run into as a pastor is someone's unwillingness to give themselves completely over to the will of God as is expressed in Scripture. An unwillingness to just trust what the Word of God says because they think that if they're going to do that, they're going to somehow lose a measure of control over their lives.

This is a delusion that there are certain things that you have in your grasp, in control, and if I were to just trust the Word of God, and obey what the Bible says about this issue, this would mean that I give up some measure of control. I want you to understand that thought that you're in control, is a delusion. Your imagined control does not exist.

I heard someone say once, "It is easier to believe in God than it is to believe God." I think that's true only in this sense: it's easier to believe in God when you can create a God of your own making, when you can make God in your own image, than it is to actually believe Him when He reveals who He really is, create a God that you can serve on your own terms. But if you believe in the God of the Bible, then you understand He is God and you are not. He is sovereign and you are not. And even when you do obey Him, though you strive, though you work, the outcome is still completely dependent on Him.

He's sovereign over everything, including the outcome of your labors. That's the thread that runs through all five verses, is this truth: man can't do anything without God, but God gives good things. Let me say that again: we can't do anything without God, but (we need to know this) God gives good things. Everything's vain, everything's worthless, unless God does what you can't do, and yet God gives good things.

Pause and think about this for a moment. If God is sovereign and you are not, if He ultimately decides and you do not, if His power must accomplish what you cannot, if you are completely dependent upon Him, why would you not be filled with anxiety instead of joy? If God is sovereign over everything, why are you not filled with anxiety? I mean you're not in control, He is. So, why are you not filled with anxiety, instead of joy? Answer, because I know this: He is more trustworthy than I am. I want Him in control over everything in my life, because He's more trustworthy than I am.

When I consider that He is absolutely holy, and I am a sinner, and yet He has chosen to relate Himself to me in grace and mercy and love, in His Son Jesus Christ, then I realize something, this God who is wonderful and holy and perfectly wise, and all of the rest that the Bible says about Him, this God loves me, cares about me, I want my life completely in His hand. It actually is, whether I try to imagine it is or not. It is in His hands, and I'm glad that it is because He is more trustworthy than I am.

His sovereignty fills my heart with joy, not anxiety, because He is more trustworthy than I am. Interesting how the Lord describes His people in verse two. "It is in vain that you rise up early and go away late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for He gives to his ..." what? "Beloved sleep." His people whom He loves, He takes care of them.

I know that He's perfectly good. I know that He's infinitely wise. I know that He's all mighty and power. I know that He's steadfast in love. I know that He's trustworthy in all circumstances. I know that He's purposeful over everything that He governs, and He governs everything, and that gives me peace, not anxiety. What this means, is that He calls me then to work hard in a state of rest. I work hard at what He's given me as an assignment. What He tells me to do, I work hard at it. But I work hard at it in a state of rest.

He calls me to obey Him, so I do, but while I'm obeying Him, I'm looking to Him for what I could never accomplish without Him. I'm going to obey Him, looking to Him for what I could never accomplish without Him. That's the theme. God controls everything and He's good. He gives good things.

Now, notice, the Psalmist illustrates this in four ways. He gives four examples. And if we consider these four examples in sort of large categories, we could state it this way. First of all, God is sovereign as builder. God is sovereign as builder. Verse one, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." God is sovereign as builder. And in this particular example, he's talking about a house, a home. "Unless the Lord builds the house, any house, those who build it labor in vain." God is sovereign as builder.

Second, God is sovereign as defender. "Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." God is sovereign as defender. God is sovereign as provider. Verse two, "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."

And then God is sovereign as rewarder. He's the gift giver. Verse three, "Behold children are a heritage from Yahweh. A heritage from God, from the Lord. The fruit of the womb a reward." God is the one who gives children.

So, unless Yahweh builds, your labor is for nothing. Unless Yahweh defends the city, you're not safe. God is able to provide in ways that are not represented in our labors and our concerns. I mean He's able to do more for me, if He chooses to, when I'm asleep than when I'm awake. God can provide for me when I'm doing nothing. So, even when I'm working hard to provide for myself, unless He provides, I get nowhere. He's sovereign over this. And God is the one who gives children. He's the one who give sons and the security that they provide once they're grown, once we're into our older years.

This is a world view, isn't it? This is a world view. That God is sovereign over these common areas, these four common areas where people are always working: working to build, working to defend, working to provide, thinking that they can provide for themselves even these gifts that come from the hand of God. As people are labouring, do they understand that unless the Lord does it, nothing gets done? That God is sovereign over all these things? This is a world view.

It's not an argument for inactivity. It's not an argument for us to do nothing. But it is an argument against misplaced confidence. As you're labouring to build the house, where's your confidence? As you're labouring to defend something, where's your confidence? As you're labouring to provide, where's your confidence? Who are you looking to? Who are you depending on?

It's an argument for us to stop stressing as if it all depends on us. Are you building as if it all depends on you? Are you defending as if it all depends on you? Are you seeking to provide as if it all depends on you?

So, it's not inactivity, it's trust that he has in mind. So that what we end up doing if we believe this Psalm, is we work but in a spirit of rest. Do you know about that? What it means to work in

a spirit of rest? We work in a spirit of rest. We trust instead of worrying. Or we're told is, what's you're worrying going to change? What's it going to change? What do you get out of all your anxiety?

It's an argument to be humbly thankful instead of boasting. "It's in vain that you rise up early, go let to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for He gives to His beloved sleep." God gives to you sleep or in your sleep. Do you understand that God has given you what you have? I mean there's no grounds for boasting there. God did it. You worked hard, yes, but God gave it. Is your heart full of thanks over that?

So the theme that runs through this is: God's sovereignty over everything. You can't do anything without God. But He gives to His beloved sleep. And children for example, are a heritage from His hand. God gives good things. Your life is in His hands and He's a good God. You can trust Him. So, you do labour, but you labour in rest.

That brings us to the third thought this morning. We've seen these four illustrations of the theme. Now let's apply it to a subject matter that's raised in the Psalm that has to do with how we think about children. How do we think about children? Let' apply this world view to your work as a parent. I'll tell you what's interesting about this Psalm, you'll notice in the title "A Song of a Ascents. Of Solomon". This seems to been a Psalm written for pilgrims as they make their way up to Jerusalem to the place of worship.

So, as they're making their way to the place of worship, they're reminding themselves through song that God is the one upon whom their entire life depends. That's a great thing to be reminded of, isn't it? Whether we're singing or we're reading Scripture or we're talking with one another, it is good that we remind each other that our entire life depends on God. Building, defending, providing, rewards, it all depends on God. We need to remind each other of that. The life of worship is the life of acknowledging that God is God and we are not.

And so, they're rehearsing this about some of the most common things in life. Four common areas where people exert their efforts and energies, and included in that is the thought of children. And maybe even specifically what he has in mind, sons. Because you'll notice this man who is blessed in verse five is not put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. His children end up being a protection for this man, an instrument of God's defense for this man. And so, perhaps, even sons are especially in mind.

But rehearsing how God provides everything, and we include our children in this, we're thinking about how we view them and what we consider them to be from the hand of God. And as we think about doing this with joy, blessing, worship, let's apply this for a moment. Let me tell you what it means to be a joyful parent.

Number one: joyful parents know their role. Joyful parents know their role. Or we could say it this way, a joyful home is a humble home.

One of the things that's going to rob you of joy in the work of parenting, is the thought that whatever is going to happen with your children is completely dependent on you. You're not

going to be a joyful parent if you think that the outcome of your child raising, the outcome with your children is completely depending on you. To say it another way, you don't want to parent in the mistaken belief that the only power at work in your home is a power explained by you. What power is at work in your home as you're raising your children? Is it just your power? Your strength? Your abilities? Do you have no other resources available to you than you? Is there no other help at work in your home but you? Are you depending on the arm of the flesh?

Our role as a parent, even a grandparent, is an important one. It's a careful one. It's a sobering one. But here's what I want you to get a hold of, it's a limited one. You are limited even in your role as a parent, you are limited. "What do you mean Richard?" I mean this, I am not God to my children. God is God to my children. People labour in building a house, but if God is not the builder, their work is in vain. People labour to defend the city, but if the Lord doesn't watch over it, it's exposed. It doesn't matter how many forces you bring together to defend your city. If the Lord doesn't watch over it, you're not safe. And you can labour, and people do, labour as if taking care of your life is all depending on.

You labour, working your fingers to the bone to make sure you take care of you. Do you understand that the Lord can provide for you if He wants to? With no effort from you, He can do it. And sometimes I think He illustrates that to us. Because sometimes, I know some of the businessmen in our church, they'll be labouring over in this area very, very hard, thinking this is where their harvest is going to come from, so to speak. And all of a sudden, the Lord will just bless them in some way over here, that they never even envisioned, never even had it on their mind.

God is just saying to His people, "Listen, I'm the One who takes care of you. Even when you're labouring over here with all your effort, do you understand I'm the one supplying for you? So that I'm able, if I want to, just to drop this blessing on you over here, that you never even expected?" You don't explain your provision, God does.

Well, do we take that same mindset? Listen, do we take that same understanding into our work as parents? Are you parenting as if it all depends on you? Or do you realize God is the one who must be at work for your children to be converted and for your children to grow in the Lord?

This means, if I'm going to be a joyful parent, I know my role. I'm an instrument for God's use. I'm an instrument for God's use in the lives of my children, but I'm not their God so that I'm looking to God and I'm depending on God, but I'm also directing my children to God. I want them to understand that I'm not their God. I want them to look to the Lord and learn to depend on God.

Charles Spurgeon said this, he said, "Happy is the man who hits the golden mean by so working as to believe in God, and so believing in God as to work without fear." Happy is the person who finds this balance so that so that you work as to believe in God and you so believe in God, you're working without fear.

So as a parent, I want to work in a way that I'm trusting the Lord, and I'm working in a way that I'm not afraid. "Lord the best I can do is my best. And I'm going to trust You and believe You

and follow You, but You must do this work. I'm just an instrument in Your hands. I'm not God to my children, and so Lord use me powerfully, I pray, but in a way that would please You. And let me direct my children to You." Joyful parents know their role. And if you think it all depends on you, you're going to be robbed of joy as you raise your children.

Second, joyful parents know God's mercy. A home that's going to be joyful looks to God as God. A home that's going to be joyful, thanks God; full of thanks to God for all of His mercies. We have that in our hearts, and we teach our children to have that in their hearts.

The third verse reminds us that the children themselves have come to us from the hand of God. "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord." This is true, whether you've had your children naturally, or whether you have your children through adoption. Either way, they've come to you from the hand of God. They're a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward. Not only are they from the hand of God, they're a gift from the Lord. They're a reward, they're a blessing. They have value. This is how we're meant to see children. Great value.

And, we have the opportunity to shape the next generation with purpose, like arrows in the hand of a warrior, are the children of one's youth. Children are a great, great blessing. We ought to be full of thanks for them.

I was saddened. I think Ireland finally removed the restriction on abortion, everybody throwing a great party over it. You know, having great joy because now they can murder babies in the womb. Isn't that sad? What's our view of children when we think that way?

So, believers, we understand that children are a great blessing. We have thankful homes, thankful for our children. Again, Mr. Spurgeon said this. He said,

Children born to men in their early days by God's blessing, become the comfort of their riper years. A man of war is glad of weapons which may fly where he cannot. Good sons are their fathers' arrows, speeding to hit the mark which their sires aim at.

Let me just stop there and just insert a thought. Isn't it wonderful when you see your grown children (some of us in this room we've now raised our children into their adult years), when you see your children having a heart for, a desire for aiming their life at something that you had in your heart? And maybe even you weren't able to fully accomplish it, and now they're taking that next step like arrows sent toward a target that you had in your heart the entire time. Now, they are heading toward accomplishing something you never could. What a joy that is.

He goes on to say, "What wonders a good man can accomplish if he has affectionate children to second his desires, and lean themselves to his designs. To this end, we must have our children in hand while they are yet children." And this kind of aiming, where does it begin? It begins when they're little.

To this end, we must have our children in hand while they are yet children or they are never likely to be so when they've grown up. And we must try to point them and straighten them so as to make arrows of them in their youth. Lest they should prove

crooked and unserviceable in after life.

Let the Lord favour us with loyal, obedient, affectionate offspring, and we shall find in them our best helpers. We shall see them shot forth into life to our comfort and delight if we take care from the very beginning, that they are directed to the right point. That's our task. To take them and by the grace of God, point them, shape them, asking God to do with them what we know we can never accomplish in our strength to see them do. And yet, the whole time knowing we're limited in this. "I can't produce it, but Lord make me an instrument for it. So that my greatest labour over my children is going to be prayer. But in addition to prayer, I'm going to teach them the Word of God and live out the Word of God before them and shape their lives in such a way that by the grace of God, they're aimed in the right direction in their after life," as he puts it. "They accomplish something for the glory of God by the grace of God."

Are you thankful? Do you have a thankful heart? God put these children into your hands. Now you have the great opportunity to shape their lives for the future. Does that fill your heart with gratefulness? And whatever good work you see in the lives of your children, give the Lord thanks. He did it. He accomplished it. Without Him, all your labour would have been for nothing.

In fact, one quick side note before we move on, I want to say to all the parents, please remember something, you do not parent for your glory. I'm afraid that there are great many parents that their child raising is wrapped up really in their reputation. "I want my children to reflect well on me." Well, there's an aspect of that that's appropriate. But ultimately what I want, is I want my children to know God. I want them to know God through His Son Jesus Christ. That's what I'm most concerned about.

It's possible to discipline the behaviour of your child and forget that his or her real need is in the heart. It has to do with the need for regeneration. And sometimes, this gap develops in parenting between a child's behaviour and their spiritual condition. Their behaviour sort of is on the uptick because we're teaching to say "yes" and "no" in the right kinds of ways, and to behave in the right kinds of ways. And so, their behaviour seems to be on the uptick, but the baseline has never changed because they've never been converted.

And so, what happens is just a gap exists called hypocrisy. Between what they appear to be and what they really are. And then sometimes parents are shocked when what we thought our child was, they throw away and they become something altogether different. In truth, they didn't throw away what they were, they threw away the appearance of something. They were never saved, they were never converted. Their life was never changed at the baseline.

Well, what we want to do as parents is not so concentrate on what people see that we forget what is most important. And that's what goes on in the heart. Do they really know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour? That's what you're aiming at as a parent: your child's heart. And so, in that kind of way, aiming the arrows.

Joyful parents know their role. We know our limitations. Joyful parents are thankful parents. God has given us these children and we have a great opportunity with them; not a burden, not a

nuisance, not an interruption in our schedules, a joyful opportunity from the hand of God.

Third, joyful parents delight in God's blessing. That's what we're being called to in the fifth verse. This is what the man is called to recognize: you're blessed. "Blessed is the man, joyful, who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate."

This is a man in his later years, when the Lord has done His work in the lives of his children, who finds friendship and help and protection from his children. They were the focus of your diligent effort, and now later in life, they become the focus of your grateful delight. God may use your children for those things you desire to build. God may use your children for your defense. God may use your children for your provision. And if you worship the Lord through all of this, He will certainly use your children to fill your heart with a sense of His good gifts.

Oh Lord, how blessed I am. What gifts you've given me in all of my life including my children. This is a Psalm that calls us to praise God, to live lives of worship, lives that recognize that everything depends on God and God gives good things. So, my knowledge of His sovereignty does not fill my heart with anxiety, it fills my heart with joy because He is infinitely more trustworthy than I am. And that sets me free to get rid of the delusion if there's some area of my life where I want to retain control. Rather, I want to give myself to God without reserve. Obeying anything He says in His Word. He is ultimately in control anyway, and He has told me what is the safe path, the wise path, the path of joy, the path of blessing, the path of reward. He is a giver of good things. Will I not then trust Him with all of my life in every area that His word addresses? That's the life of worship.

So, I finish this morning by just asking you, who is your God? Is your God a God of your own making? A God that you can sort of put in and out of your pocket? Sort of the genie Jesus. We pull Him out when we need something. We put Him back when we want to go our own way. Or is your God the God who is sovereign over all things, every area of your life and you trust Him? Have you come to know the true and living God? The God of the Bible through faith in His Son Jesus Christ? Have you given your life to the Lord by giving your life to Christ?

Who is your God? How is your home? Can you really say to me this morning, "Richard, by the grace of God, our home is a joyful place? It's a place that's joyful because as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord. The Lord is honoured there. And so, our home is a joyful, warm place."

When your children leave your home one day, will they look back on these years and their memories be full of warmth and joy, because there was godliness in your home? Or is your home right now a place of strife, and all sorts of other expressions of chaos because you're trying to retain control instead of acknowledging, "You know what, unless the Lord builds the city, we're going to build it in vain. Unless He defends, we're not safe. Unless He provides, we don't have anything. He's the one who gives good gifts, we're going to trust Him." How's your home?

So, how will you raise your children? As if it all depends on you, or you know your limits? You're just an instrument in the hand of God. With thankful hearts, or complaining hearts?

Because sometimes raising children is difficult. But will your hearts be full of thanks to God so that you can give Him praise for His good gifts, and those good gifts include your children? Let's pray together.

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for Your Word, that points us away from us and puts our eyes on You. We thank You Lord that You are sovereign over everything. We thank You Father in Heaven that You are good. And not only are You good but You tell us what is good. And so, I pray for myself and I pray for my brethren, that we would get to the place in our lives where we would jettison this imaginary thing that we have some control over life. And we would instead Lord, in a in a way of complete abandonment, just trust You. And believe what Your Word says and rest in what You tell us is true; work when You tell us to work, labour hard where You tell us to labour hard, but depending on You every step of the way so that we learn what it is to work in rest, and not to boast in what is accomplished but to humbly give You thanks for what You do. And to recognize that You are the giver of every good gift. It all comes down from the Father of Lights.

We are dust, but You've had mercy upon us. We were lost, blind, enslaved, but You set us free and brought us to Yourself, and now You give us good things. Oh Lord, why would we not trust You? And so, I pray whoever, anyone listening to me has struggled with believing Your word and obeying it, may You grant them even in this moment that desire, to turn from life lived their way, and to walk in the way You set forth in Your Word.

Thank You for Jesus. Thank You for His shed blood that answers for all of our sins. Thank You that He's brought us to You. We are reconciled to You. We are Your children now and forever. For this, we give You praise. And thank You Lord for our children and strengthen us to raise them in a joyful way, knowing our limitations, trusting You to do what only You can. We ask for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.