

**Sermon Transcript from October 30th, 2016
Slow Church (We Value Rootedness)
Pastor Dave Lomas, Reality San Francisco**

We're in our last week of a vision and values series that we started a few weeks ago. And here's our vision statement. This is what we've been saying for a while now. This is what we say to the church if you've been a part of Welcome to Reality or whatever. Our vision statement is: "We are a community following Jesus, seeking renewal in our city."

That is our vision statement. That's who we are. That's where we're going. That's our identity. Now, that's great. We really love that. But, what we've been asking and what we asked ourselves a few years ago and what we've been asking ourselves in this series on our vision series is what is the felt experience of that vision statement? What does that vision statement feel like embodied? What would a culture like that – what kind of culture, if that community was a real community and that's what we hope we are, what does that kind of community value? That's what we've been asking.

We think that our values are what it would feel like in our hearts and in our minds and in our bodies if we live into our vision. So, our values are like, "What is the felt experience of our vision lived out?"

That's what we've been talking about. What is the felt experience of our vision lived out? And these are our values, and it is this: faith, humility, hospitality and rootedness. This is what we've said are our values at Reality San Francisco. We value faith. We believe faith is the felt experience of following Jesus. If you are a follower of Jesus, it takes tremendous faith. It also is the experience of renewal. If we want to see renewal happen in our city, we have to trust and believe in faith that Christ brings about His renewal. He's doing that work.

We also value humility. Humility is the felt experience of following Jesus in community. You need humility if you live in community. If you want to see renewal happen in our lives and in the lives of our city, we need great humility and first admitting that we need renewal and seeing renewal work through us.

Hospitality is the felt experience of being a Jesus community. We want to be a Jesus community and we want to be at the very core of what it means to be a Christian is the hospitality of God to bring us in. We talked about this last week. Today, we are talking about rootedness. Rootedness. And we believe this is the felt experience of seeking renewal in our city. It will feel like us giving our lives here. That's what we believe if we are community that's really trying to see renewal happen in San Francisco, it will feel like us giving our lives, rooting our lives here, limiting ourselves to going, "I'm going to be committed to the work of God in San Francisco."

It's our elders believing that, it's our staff believing that, it's our leaders believing that. At some level, we're rooting ourselves in this city so that we can see the renewal of San Francisco. It's going to take a lot of us over a very long period of time. That's what we think. So, that's kind of what I want to talk about today. So, let me read to you guys John 15 from the Message Bible translation by Eugene Peterson. It's a great modern translation of the Bible in our modern vernacular. So, let me read it to you. Listen. I believe it's on the screen. Is it on the screen tonight? We do have it. No? Yes, we do. Look at that.

Follow along on the screen. Or, if you listen best with your eyes closed and not falling asleep, then that's great. Then listen.

John 15. This is Jesus speaking, by the way. Jesus saying this: **"I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.**

"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

"I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my

disciples.

"I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love.

"I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I am no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

"You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.

"But remember the root command: Love one another."

This is God's Word. Let's pray.

Lord, this evening I ask You, God, that You would teach us, Lord, that You would instruct us, God, that You would minister to us. There is a gap between where we're at and where we know that You're taking us, where we're at and what we're called to live into, where we're at and where You want us to be. And I pray, tonight, by Your Spirit that that gap would be bridged by our confession and Your strong name; Your faithfulness to come and get us where we're at. I know that we've all come here with all kinds of stuff we've carried in. Internally, externally, things done to us, things we've done. And we ask for grace tonight, Jesus. We turn to You for grace and we ask, God, that You would meet us and that You would teach us and that we would learn to be Your disciples tonight. Would You give me energy and strength and keep my voice? Just keep my voice, God. Help me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Tonight might sound a bit undeveloped, this topic, and it's because I think it really is a bit undeveloped. This topic of rootedness is a late addition to our values. Something we've said for years now but still are trying to get language for. This is a very difficult topic to be teaching on, to be honest. I honestly would rather be teaching — I think it was way easier to prepare on the series on God's wrath earlier in the year than this sermon. This has been a very hard sermon, to where even last night I kept on waking up thinking, "This doesn't make any sense."

And then I would talk myself out of it. I walked into this morning when I taught at the morning gathering and I walked up honestly wishing that this wasn't a value I had to teach on. Like, I was like, "Why do we have this value?"

But, at the same time feeling that what I want more than anything is to belong to this kind of a community. So, that's where I'm at tonight. So, I'm going to try to stumble through this as best as I can. I hope that through us talking about it in community and us living this felt experience out that we would maybe even get better language around it. But, let me just give my best shot tonight at explaining what we mean when we talk about how we value being rooted in San Francisco or rooted in Christ as we're rooted in this city.

Here it is. Here's how we define rootedness. This is what we say when we talk about rootedness. We are rooted in Jesus, the Good Vine. We're rooted in Christ and we are practicing devotion to a community in a place. So, we're rooted in Christ, the Good Vine. Our lives are found in Him, hidden in Him, there's this organic quality that we're so in Christ where He's in us and we're in Him. Our home is in Christ and His home is in us, as Eugene Peterson says. That our home is in Christ. And, we're also practicing devotion to a community in a physical place. So, we're not just rooted in Christ and we're just moving around the earth and we're not rooted in a place and we're not known by anybody. That is counter intuitive to what Jesus is saying here. That we're rooted in Christ and then we give our lives to one another in personal devotion.

Do you see what Jesus said there? He said, "Keep your home in me and my home in you, and then love one another. And this is the best way to love one another. Put your life on the line for each other."

So, this is what He wants. He wants us to be connecting to Him and then interconnected

with each other, that we would be a community of mutual devotion, that we're devoted to each other; deeply devoted to each other. So, I mean, this is a really hard thing to move toward. But, this is what we mean when we talk about rootedness. That there is personal devotion to Jesus, but also we're moving towards devotion to one another. Saint Benedict called this skill "stability." Stability. That's basically what we're talking about here. We're talking about stability, and this is what stability means: stability is the spiritual skill for staying put to get somewhere. Stability is the spiritual skill, a spiritual discipline, a formative practice of staying put to get somewhere.

Most of us think by getting somewhere we always have to be on the move. We always have to keep getting our passports stamped. We always have to be moving through relationships. We always have to be moving through jobs and careers. Stability, for a Christian practice, is, "I'm staying put in order to truly get somewhere, to truly become a kind of person."

It's a long term commitment to a group of people. And in our commitment to Jesus and our apprenticeship to Jesus, we need stable communities like children need stable families. We need a stable community. Because, following Jesus is messy and difficult work at times. Following Jesus is messy and difficult work sometimes, and we need places where we can be held and our questions and all our doubts and all our brokenness can be held in a community that's committed, that's stable, that's committed to us even though when we show up to our community – whether it's in the form of a community group or our Christian community that we're walking through in life and it might not be a formal community group. Like, our community of mutual devotion, we're not going anywhere and some one of us is going through the hardest thing in our lives and the other people are there and it's a stable place that there's roots that go down and shade given for that person to have a sanctuary.

Like, this is what it means. This morning we had baptisms. We had baptisms this morning. And there, I met a man named Victor. He was an atheist who stumbled into our church at the beginning of this year right when we started The Year of Biblical Literacy. And he heard the challenge to read the Bible even if you're not a believer since the Bible is the best-selling book in history. And we offered this challenge. The Bible's the best-selling book in history. So, if you don't even believe in God, you should probably read this book. I'm like, it's the best book in history.

So, I challenge you. And he heard it as an atheist. He goes, "I was a staunch atheist. So, I was there and I stumbled in church and I heard this and I'm like, 'Okay. That's worth it. I'll give it a shot.'"

So, he started reading the Bible with our Year of Biblical Literacy reading program and then he decided to sign up for a community group. Today, he was baptized. Praise God. I listened to his testimony and talked to him afterwards and I had heard about him from his community group leader like three months ago. And his community group leader was telling me, "There's this guy in my group that just showed up for The Year of Biblical Literacy and he's not a Christian and he doesn't know what happens in the New Testament. He's not got there yet. And we're not spoiling it for him. They're like, 'Guys, this story is going to turn. I know it. It has to turn.'"

Ah, man. That must have been so fun to watch. So, he had all these questions. He would it all up in the group. So, I was talking to Victor today and he said this. He said he was so thankful for his community group because he made a commitment to show up every week. And he goes, "Because I made that commitment, I had to read the Bible. I had to show up and talk about it. So, I had to do the reading. So, I would read it and then I would go and ask all these questions and my group didn't answer them all but just let me have space to wrestle this out."

But, the group forced him and created a space for him to both wrestle with the questions and with the Bible in group every week. It was a stability group. It was a rooted group for him to come in going, "This is a safe place. You guys know my stuff. And I don't understand what's going on in Judges. What is happening?"

Like, he would freak out about certain passages and then he'd get to Isaiah and he's like, "I think there's something coming."

All this really, really fun stuff. We need community like this. We need a community like that that we can grow and be held and be challenged. But, in order for these good and joyous and safe places to exist, there must be a commitment to rootedness. There has to be some sort of commitment to being rooted with each other. There must be some sort of commitment if we want to see long term fruitfulness in San Francisco. There has to be

some sort of commitment to being rooted. It's a virtue that Saint Benedict and the Benedict Order has long called "stability."

Here's a vow, and this is so good. This is scary, but it's good. This is a vow of stability from a Benedictine monastery. Anyone who goes to this monastery sings this vow and commits to this vow. And this is what they vow together. Listen to this:

"We vow to remain all our life with our local community. We live together, pray together, work together, relax together. We give up the temptation to move from place to place in search of an ideal situation. Ultimately, there is no escape from one's self. The idea that things would be better some place else is usually an illusion. And when interpersonal conflicts arise, we have a great incentive to work things out and restore peace. This means learning the practices of love, acknowledging one's own offensive behavior, giving up one's preferences, forgiving."

That is so beautiful. I think every person, if we're honest, we want to be a part of a community like that. But, most of us in here don't want to give up our autonomy to make that kind of community. Like, everyone in this town wants community of some sort. We all love the fruit of community. We want a stable community. We want to go to a church that's deeply rooted. But, none of us really want to give up our individual autonomy to make that happen. All of us want really great community. But like, "Okay. So, you're saying that I have to limit myself? I can't just opt in when I want to and opt out when I want to?"

"No. You're committed to this group."

"Eh. No. That sounds like a cult to me. But, if that group was there, I would love to join in that group and then pop in and pop out because it sounds like a really fun, cool space. But, I don't want to commit to making that kind of group happen."

Everyone wants this. I think we really, really, really want a community, a group like this, a church like this, a life like this, a group of people like this that you're journeying through life with. But, it also means that we have to limit our options. It also means that we have to truly opt in in saying there's no opt out here. We're in this thing together. Now, there's a reason why a lot of this might sound foreign or strange to you. Like, when I talk about this kind of community, everyone gets really quiet. We're like, "Well, we want that. But, that sounds really weird. That sounds really strange."

The reason why it sounds strange is because you live in San Francisco. This city, the very ethos came from gold miners. Like, the very ethos of this city. I mean, there it is. That's how this city started. Miners. Remember the book I quoted a while back? Remember this book right here of Billy Graham in his book "Crusade at the Golden Gate?" Do you guys remember that book I quoted a few weeks ago? In the book, they quote William Taylor. William Taylor was a Methodist street preacher in the 1800s. Methodist street preacher in San Francisco in the 1800s. He wrote a book in 1856 called "Seven Years Street Preaching in San Francisco."

This is the 1800s. This is what he says. He writes that the difficulty of Christian mission and ministry and churches getting established in a city were three things. 1958.

"Isolated condition of society, the migratory character of the population and the basic attraction of material gain."

People are isolated here. That's why it doesn't work. Everyone kind of lives and keeps to themselves. Everyone is transient. People move in and move out of this city. And everyone here is here for gold. 1858. Okay. So then in 1958, 100 years later, a study was done for the Billy Graham crusade and they asked all these Bay Area ministers in 1958, "What are some of the major problems that face the church in the Bay Area?"

And this is what they said:

"Mobility, money, pagan background and no community."

Those were the top of the list. And this is what they said. Let me just quote it to you:

"Mobility. In the next 12 months, there will be 1 change of address for every 2 families."



This was 1958.

"A telephone executive estimates that only 1 out of 3 phones will be connected to the same address for a full year. There is a tremendous desire to move. An unsettling feeling."

Money, they say this:

"New churches are needed to reach the 8,200 new people coming to the bay every month. The land alone for a new church costs \$40,000."

Wow. That's a lot of money.

"People who have moving in the back of their minds won't invest in the land for a church they soon expect to leave."

So, it's expensive to live here and then people, because they know in the book of their minds, "We're going to leave," they never want to invest in the church.

Three, pagan background:

"The pagan spirit of 1849 still dominates. Much of the rest of the country was settled by people looking for a way of life which included family and church. But, California was settled by people who were seeking for only one thing: money. Stores and mines, but not churches, were the center of the towns. San Francisco has never had a great influential church. The city has no religious heritage of any significance."

That's what they wrote. And lastly, they wrote this. Community:

"There is no community spirit out here. It is pioneer and independent spirit. People from other parts of the country came from towns where there was community tradition including church, but all the ties have been broken as they are uprooted to the West Coast. San Francisco has always been a city, but not a community. Here is a splendid open door for the church to provide a community that cares."

This was in 1958. I guess my point is this. My point is that entrenched in the very fabric and the ethos of this modern city is the idea and the spirit of a miner. A 49er. A miner. Think of it like this. Miners don't set down roots where they live. They live in camps. They often don't even live where they mine because they can't because it's unlivable. They live outside in camps. They move there to extract materials from the land and then once the materials are extracted, they move on.

They often leave the land depleted when they leave. So, they come and they take the best from the land and then they leave. This has been the spirit of this city since its modern inception. People move here for an opportunity. People move here and leave their families behind. In 1849, they left their wives and their kids behind and most of the people that filled this city were men and men looking for money. That's how this city started. And most of us, maybe even unconsciously, have thought about our time here in San Francisco as a miner. You've set up shop, you're here for a few years, going to hope and strike gold in your career, you enjoy this city and the people in this city, but you see no long term future here.

The truth is that the majority of our members of our church disappear annually to be replaced by another class of attendees. The size of our church grows a little every year, but the annual turnover of attendees in our church is somewhere between 4 and 5 hundred people a year. That's how many people turnover in our community groups every year. 4 to 5 hundred people a year. Churches like us, with these kind of numbers, are in danger of becoming what could be called a "flash mob church." Flash mob churches are actually a real thing where they gather in a space through social media and they all go to some decrepit church and they all have a worship service and then they all disappear. Churches that are able to harness social networking and energy to gather an impressive crowd but soon disappear. And this is, honestly, when I walked up here tonight and when I told you I walked up on stage this morning, this is hard. This is hard stuff to teach and preach. But, I want so badly to be the kind of community that's rooted in this city. I don't want our church to be this fragile environment and when you walk in you're like, "Everyone's going to leave. Everyone's going to leave."

Or you walk into a community group and you're like, "Everyone here's going to leave."

You walk into a church and it's like, "No one's here for the long haul. No one's here to see this thing through."

Not only that, but another reason rootedness or stability might sound uncomfortable to us is because we're increasingly living as a culture in a culture of non-places. We live in a culture of non-places whether you live in San Francisco or not. The reason why it was probably easy to move here is that we kind of live – especially millennials – in these non-places. An anthropologist describes a place versus a non-place as this:

"Places are concerned with history, relationships and identity, therefore spaces that are not concerned with history, relationships or identity are non-places. One passes through them. They are not places in which to set roots. Rather, they are built for rootlessness. Airports and highways are examples of non-places."

The problem is that we're turning most of our lives into non-places. Some of us work at a non-place. You bring yourself to work as someone who is passing through. Like, your work is like an airport. You're getting somewhere and you don't see any rootedness there at all and you know you don't. Like, "I'm just passing through here."

Some of us see this city as a non-place. You don't have any intention of stopping here. You have no intention of putting down roots here. You have every intention of making this a non-place that you don't want to be concerned with its history, its relationships or its identity and you want to move right through it. Relationships. We live where a lot of our relationships, we just pass through them or we swipe through them. We just kind of go from one relationship to the next relationship to the next relationship and we're like, "I don't really want to commit. You know what I want to do? I want to keep my options open because the perfect person is out there."

That's what we tell ourselves. Some of us, this church is a non-place for you. You're not letting down roots at all. You've passed through, you're receiving the church's religious goods and services and you're like, "I just hope not to screw up too bad in my time in San Francisco and I hope this church kind of helps me out."

You're here and you're passing through. And it seems like with every place we could set down roots, we don't set down roots because we want to keep our options open. We want to keep our options open. There's some of you that have been to this church for a year and you're not sure if you're going to commit to this church yet. You're like, "But, there might be a better one out there. But, I just haven't found it yet."

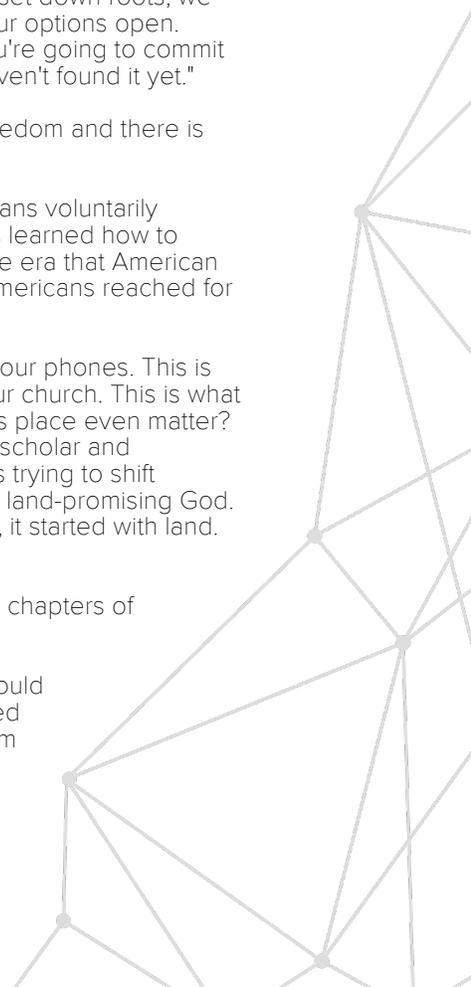
And you just keep your options open. To limit our option feels like choking out our freedom and there is nothing more sacred to us than our freedom. Author David Janssen writes:

"The 20th century will be remembered as an age of wondrous creativity when Americans voluntarily shattered their lives into distant and dissonant fragments because America's industries learned how to assemble atomic bombs, airplanes, iPads and the genetic code of life itself in the same era that American society disassembled the ancient overlap of family, food, faith and the field of work. Americans reached for the stars as they withered their roots, inhabited space but lost any sense of place."

Inhabited space. This is what we do. This is what we do online. This is what we do on our phones. This is what we do on our computers. This is what we do at our jobs. This is what we do at our church. This is what we do in our city. We inhabit a space, but we don't have any sense of place. And does place even matter? Should we have a place that we root ourselves? Does it even matter? Old Testament scholar and theologian, Walter Brueggemann, wrote a really long book called "The Land," and he's trying to shift scholarship to see the important act of land, that God has always been an embodied, land-promising God. And when Heaven comes down to Earth, He's renewing the land. And when it started, it started with land. And He promised Abraham and got him to leave his family by promising him land.

Like, land is such an important part of the story of God. So, he says this in the opening chapters of his book. He says this:

"This is the failure of an urban promise. That promise concerns human persons who could lead detached, unrooted lives of endless choice and no commitment. It was glamorized around the virtues of mobility and autonomy that seemed so full of promise for freedom and self-actualization. But, it has failed. It is now clear that a sense of place is a human



hunger that urban promise has not met. It is rootlessness and not meaninglessness that characterizes the current crisis."

It is rootlessness and not meaninglessness. What if – I think this is what Walter Brueggemann is saying – our longing had more to do with our rootlessness? What if our longing for meaning had more to do with us being unrooted people and not so much about being meaningless people? What if we actually do have meaning, but we have no roots? What if we go from job to job and relationship to relationship not so much because we are trying to find meaning, but because we are rootless? And I would imagine and I believe this is actually harder to pick up on. We can't look inside and say, "Well, it's because I'm not rooted."

We don't think that because we actually live lives that feel connected even though they're not connected. We live lives that we feel connected to each other even though we're not really connected to each other. Many of us are not connected to land, we're not deeply connected and committed to a faith community and we're not even connected to ourselves. But, there's enough there to where we feel connected.

The secular prophet, Louis C.K., said a few years ago on Conan – he is a secular prophet, by the way. He just is, with a really bad mouth. He said a few years ago on Conan O'Brien that he doesn't want his kids to have cellphones because he wants them to be sad. I don't know if you've ever seen this clip. He's like, "I don't want my kids to have cellphones because I want them to be sad."

And he goes on and he explains. He says, "Sadness comes when you're forced to be alone with your thoughts. That's just what the phones are taking away. The ability to just sit there. Sitting there, that's being a person."

That's what he says. He's arguing that just sitting there is being a person. He goes, "Every single one of us has a forever empty spot in us."

Secular prophet, I'm telling you. "We have a forever empty spot, and there's times when we sit there and we're sitting with ourselves that that empty spot comes up and says, 'Oh, you're lonely. Ah, you're empty.' And we're like, 'Ah,' and we try to get away from it."

He described a day when he was driving along and this emotionally intense Bruce Springsteen song came on the radio. And he was driving and he said he started to feel that forever empty spot, that spot of melancholy, rise up within him. And his instant response to that melancholy was to want to grab his phone to text someone. He goes, "I just want to grab my phone. And I grabbed it and I'm driving and I'm about to text. People are willing to risk taking a life and ruining their own because they don't want to be alone for a second. That's why we're texting and driving. We don't want to be alone. So, all I wanted to do was say hi to 15 people and see who would respond back.

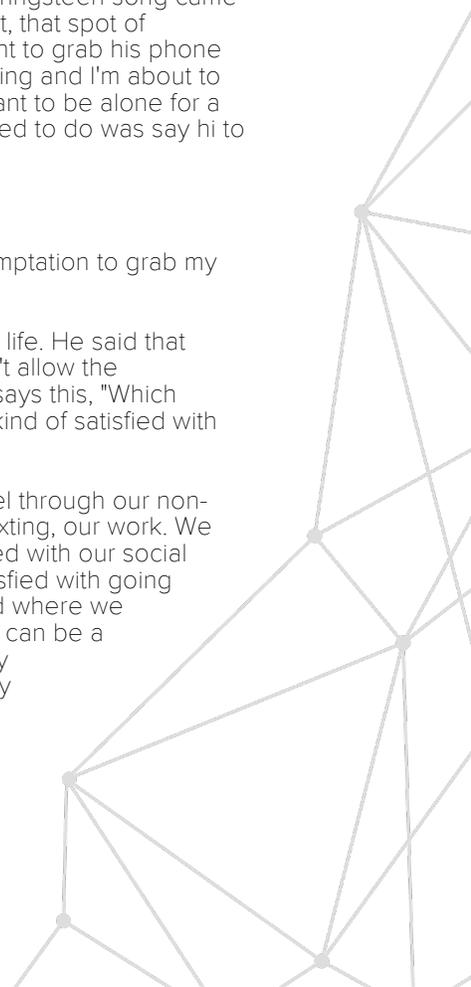
"Hi, hi, hi. Oh, that feels good."

He goes, on that day in his car, he said, "I felt the melancholy well up, I resisted the temptation to grab my phone. And then, as sadness grew, I had to pull over and weep."

And after the weeping came this equally strong joy, he says, and gratitude for his own life. He said that when we listen to that impulse to grab the phone and connect with someone, we don't allow the melancholy to develop. And therefore, we can't receive the coming joy. And then he says this, "Which leaves us in this situation. You don't ever feel really sad or really happy. You just feel kind of satisfied with your products and then you die, and that's why I don't want my kids to have phones."

I'm telling you. Prophet. Okay? So, this is what he said. This is us. This is us as we travel through our non-places in life. We just get enough hits from these non-places. Church, social media, texting, our work. We get just enough hits to feel like we're just satisfied with our products. We're just satisfied with our social channels. We're just satisfied with connecting with people through text. We're just satisfied with going to our church and getting that hit, and it seems like in the world we've created, a world where we can be connected to everyone but we're actually not really connected to anyone. We can be a member of this church and define that as listening to podcasts and reading the weekly newsletter and following us on Instagram while making an appearance to church every month or so.

We're like, "Yeah, yeah. That's my church. I go to it. I know what's going on."



You just know enough of what's going on to make yourself feel satisfied with the product of the church. We have enough information to where we think we're connected to other people, but we're not really showing up with our minds. We're not really showing up with our souls. We're not really showing up with our bodies to participate in real and tangible ways with each other. We're not rooted with one another. We're not like, "I'm here. I'm here with all of my quirky theological beliefs, all of my melancholy, all of my sadness."

I mean, there's that person that shows up and every week it's the same thing. "I'm so mad because of this."

And there's no room for us to go, "Oh, just get away from you. You're making me feel sad. You're killing my vibe."

There needs to be rooted people. We need to be a people that can connect in such a way that we're so rooted that we show up with all of our junk and all of our selves and all of our questions. The real danger here of unrooted lives is that it allows us to give or receive someone's gifts without giving ourselves. We can receive someone's Instagram story or post or email and feel like we're getting a piece of them, but we're not really getting themselves. Jesus never disembodied His gifts from His person. If you want Jesus' stuff, you get Him. If you want Him, you get His stuff.

This is the way Jesus lived. With Him, access to one is access to both. If you want access to Jesus' gifts, you have to access His person. If you access His person, you get access to His gifts. This is why the metaphor of the vines and the branches is so complete. If you want the gifts of Jesus, they don't come without being rooted in Jesus. So, Jesus says this: "I am the vine, you are the branches. When you are joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is abundant."

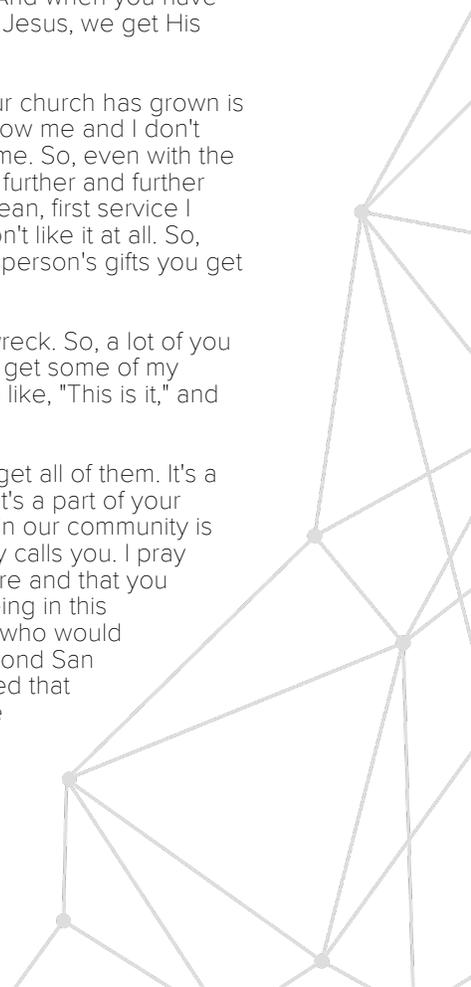
Listen to what He says: **"Separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be acted upon."**

Listen to that again. Let me say this again. "If you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you," – see, we're now connected. We get Jesus and Jesus gets us and then you get the stuff. Then you get the gifts. You can't ask and it will be done for you if you don't have me. And when you have me, this is what you get access to. This is us rooting ourselves in Jesus. When we get Jesus, we get His whole person.

This is, I'll just be completely transparent with you. The scary thing always for me as our church has grown is that what I don't like about a large church – I hate, actually. I despise it – is that you know me and I don't know you. It's really hard to know the church. It causes all these really weird things in me. So, even with the technology of the microphone, I could speak to more and more people, but I also get further and further away from you. I can get far and far away from you. There's people in the balcony. I mean, first service I don't even see faces. I mean, I see a sea of faces, I just don't see individual faces. I don't like it at all. So, there's always this wrestling. Like I believe there's something about when you get the person's gifts you get it all. You get all their mess, too.

Like, a lot of you guys don't get my mess, and you should be thankful because I'm a wreck. So, a lot of you guys don't get the mess. My community group gets my mess. The elders and the staff get some of my mess. My community really gets my mess. But, they get all of it. Like, I show up and I'm like, "This is it," and everybody's sitting there like, "Whoa. Okay. Okay."

Like, this is what it means to be in community. We just don't get the person's gifts; we get all of them. It's a package deal. This is probably what might scare you about marriage. Don't be afraid, it's a part of your maturing. So, in the same way – guys, this is what I'm leading up to. Our hope for you in our community is that you would grow in your capacity to be rooted to a place wherever God eventually calls you. I pray that you would practice rootedness here. I ask that you would practice rootedness here and that you would see the value of being someone who fully shows up and is present and that being in this community at Reality San Francisco would form in you to be a person rooted in Christ who would root themselves into a place. So, you would practice it here. If God moves you on beyond San Francisco or to another place, that what you've learned at this church is that I've learned that you have to give yourself to a place. So, I'm going to go practice that somewhere else now.



So, let me end with this. An invitation and a warning. I'll end with an invitation and a warning. The invitation: don't be a gold miner, be a farmer. Don't be a miner, be a farmer. Farmers have a totally different relationship with the land than do miners. Farmers have to live in and from the land, so they think differently about what they have to do with the land. They think generationally. They know that the profit might not be there in 20 years, but it might be there for their kids. So, they lay down roots. They plant trees and do stuff for the land that they will not yield a harvest from for years and years and years and years. How they live in the land and how they take care of the land and how they root themselves in the land is completely different than the way a miner would see land. So, I'm asking you guys to start seeing yourselves as farmers here, as gardeners here, not as miners here.

The second thing I'd say is to consider staying longer. If you're here for a couple of years, consider staying four. If you're here for four years, try really hard to get placed after your residency here. Try really hard. Go, "My first top three choices are here." Just consider that. Consider staying longer than you probably had when you'd come in here.

Third, if you know you're not staying here that long, believe you are and invest in here like you are. So, if you're like, "I know that I'm only here for four years. I can't be here longer." Or, "I'm only here for two years. I can't be here longer than two years," then believe that you're staying here for life and invest in here like you are for life.

Wendell Berry, the wise farmer poet, says, "To feel at home in a place, you have to have some prospect of staying there."

To feel at home in a place, you have to have some prospect of staying there. So, if you're only here for two years and you want to make your home here, just act like you're going to stay here for a long time. Like, I'm going to invest in here like I'm here for a long time.

Then, lastly, when you have the option to leave, when you do – say you get a job offer or something else. When you're considering leaving, consider community as your family as a high priority and as high of a priority as your career path. Consider that. When you are leaving or considering leave, that you would consider community up there, that you would look and go, "Okay, yeah. So, this career path is really good and this job offer is really good. But, so is my community and do I want to leave my community. What kind of questions am I asking myself as I leave this community that I'm rooted in?"

Think of it like that. Think of your community that way. That's what we're asking of you as you're rooted in this city.

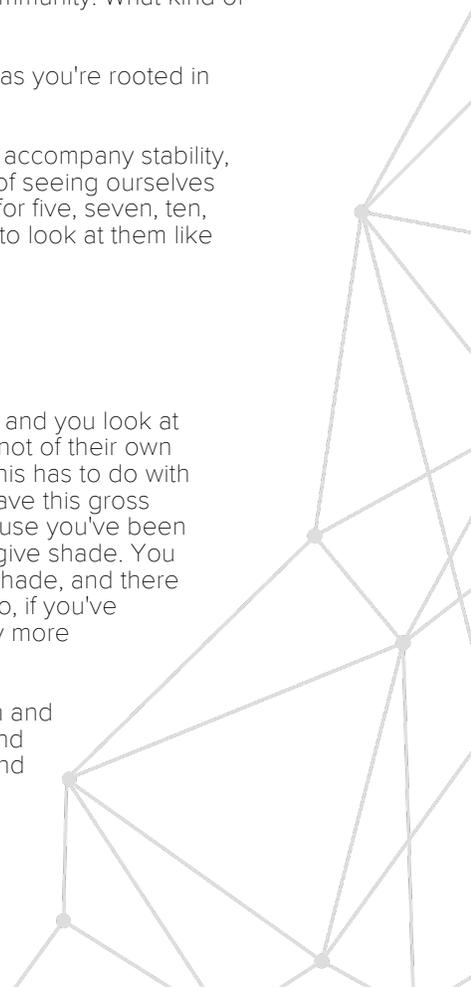
Now, some warnings before we close or as I close. Warnings. Two dangers that often accompany stability, that often accompany rootedness are this. The first warning is that we have a danger of seeing ourselves as superior to those who are new to our place. So, those of you that have been here for five, seven, ten, twenty or your whole life, whenever you see someone new, you have this temptation to look at them like you're way superior. "How long have you been here?"

"A year."

"Psh. Whatever. A year."

And you're so much better than them. Or, like, "You're not going to be here that long," and you look at everyone and you hold everyone at a distance. Especially those whose transience is not of their own choosing. So, if somebody's here and we know that they didn't choose to be here – this has to do with refugees and immigrants – we tend to have this gross temptation to look down. We have this gross temptation to feel superior. You're not better because you've been here longer. Because you've been here longer doesn't make you better. If you have roots in this city, it's so that you can give shade. You can only have shade if you have roots. So, if you have roots, it's so that you can give shade, and there are a lot of people who need your shade. There's a lot of people who need refuge. So, if you've been here for a long time, you're not better, you're not superior, you just might be way more equipped to offer shade.

Second temptation, second danger is using our embeddedness to accumulate wealth and power. People that are here longer and longer and longer accumulate more wealth and more power sometimes. Not all the time. This is the difference between rootedness and



entrenchment. Christian hospitality compels us to welcome all strangers regardless of how they found their way to our door or how long they plan to stay. So, if you are rooted here and you plan on being here and you walk into a community group and everyone's there and they've only been there for a year, you don't use your embeddedness here as a way to accumulate wealth and power. You open the door of hospitality to the people.

Similarly, developing habits of generation, sharing resources that God has given us reminds us that stability is not a means to attain status. Stability always is oriented towards the health and the flourishing of our places. It's ever an end in and of itself. We are rooted for the sake of renewal in San Francisco. We hope, as we're rooted in San Francisco, as Reality San Francisco values rootedness and tries to root itself in this city over a long period of time, we do that not in and of itself, but to offer shade, but to grow in fruitfulness.

So, you've endured this maybe rambling of a sermon. So, I'll finish with a quote by Bilbo Baggins to make everything better. Bilbo Baggins says this in *The Lord of the Rings*. It's actually a poem by J.R. Tolkien in the book. Anyway, you know. Bilbo Baggins wrote this. He says this:

"All that is gold does not glitter. Not all those who wander are lost. The old that is strong does not wither. Deep roots are not reached by the frost."

May this be true among us. May our roots grow so deep in the life of Jesus and in the life of this city that even through the coldest of seasons we are not touched or reached by the frost.

Let's pray.

Lord, I deeply, deeply desire this sort of community, of being a part of this sort of community. But, I also know, God, that this does not happen apart from us being rooted in You. It cannot. It is a byproduct; it is a fruit that abounds when we're rooted in You. I don't know if any of this resonates. I really believe by the power of Your Spirit in somehow and some way it does resonate with us and some of us that feel real disconnected. Disconnected from even our own community group, maybe our spouse, our relationship, our family. And we feel a bit meaningless or disconnected and we want so bad right now for that hit of affirmation through distraction. We cannot wait to get home and Netflix something.

I pray, God, that we would take this moment to confess that to You, we would take this moment to sit in sadness or loneliness or whatever that thing is. Feeling unrooted, feeling like we'll never have a place. Whatever that thing is, that we would sit for a moment and confess that to You and let that moment wash over us, that we would feel what it feels like to be human, to be alone, to be scared, to be feeling like we're running a rat race and we're just spinning our wheels. Whatever that is, that feeling would just settle upon us if it has to and that in that moment You would meet us, God. Meet us, Lord.

I pray that You would make us agents of shade. That we would offer shade to the broken and the weary. That You, Lord, if You've done this work in us. I know this happened. I know it's happened in our church. There's tons of stories of it. God, I pray that that would be true of our church. Root us here, Lord. May we offer shade to the immigrant and the poor and the broken and the lost and those that are far off from You, God. That people would be able to find shade under the roots of our abiding in Christ. That's what I pray for this community. In Jesus' name, amen.