

All right, everybody. Happy New Year. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad you are here with us today. Whatever campus you're at, whether you're in Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville, or Online, let's just welcome each other together for a moment. We are one church that meets at multiple campuses carrying the hope of Jesus to thousands of locations. Hope is here. Everyone is welcome and Jesus changes everything. So, wherever you are today, why don't you go ahead and grab a seat with me just for a moment and let me welcome you to RE, our three-day encounter with God. RE, those two little letters that mean to go back. And if you put them on the front of any word, they change everything.

Restore. Revive. Restore. Reignite. Redo. Jesus can re-anything. He can do anything, and He can undo anything. And if you're new with us, and you're wondering, what is this RE thing? Well, for the last bunch of years, every year at the beginning of the year, we just start with a three-day encounter with God. We worship. We fast. We pray. We cry out to Him. We hear His voice, and Jesus somehow shows up in the midst, and He RE's a whole lot of things in our life. And so, what we love to do on the first one is we bring our worship leaders together from all of our different campuses, and so today at the broadcast campus at Flower Mound, you have a lot of worship leaders from all of our different campuses, and we stream the entire service so that we start the year in unity as a church. Singing the same songs at the same time, the same way.

Praying the same prayers, declaring the same Scriptures, hearing the same thing. Reminding ourselves that we are one church and one body of Christ and one family on mission. And that it is good and pleasant when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity, for there the Lord bestows life, His blessings evermore. And so, for the next hour or so, we're just here to meet with God. If you're new, you feel free to respond however you want, but we're going to worship. We're going to sing. We're going to pray, and here's just what I want to tell you. RE. What I think God wants for you more than anything else this year is relationship. RE. He wants to start this year in relationship with you. He says, "Return to me, and I will return to you."

And so, here's what we're going to do for a moment. Will you close your eyes with me? And here's what I'm going to ask of you. Before you stand up and start to worship, I want you to take a few moments to just center yourself. Before you get up and just start going through the motions, I want to invite you to start this year with an awareness that God is here. Before we just stand up and start going through a church service, let's just take a few moments in our seat and turn our heart to God. And turn our affection to God. And turn our life to God and put down the distractions and all the other things. And right from the beginning, be aware that God is here and I am here to meet with Him. And so, when you've centered yourself on God, I invite you to stand up as a sign of faith and as a sign of surrender to say, "Jesus, this year, I'm going to be aware of You and I want to return to You in every place and in every way."

So, Jesus, we start this year by saying we are here to seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness. May Your kingdom come and Your will be done. Jesus, come and RE our lives.

That really is the prayer of the day, of the year, and of the season. Jesus, have it all. That's what RE is. That's what church is. That's what faith is. That's what Christianity is. That's what life is.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Jesus will find it. Jesus, have it all. That I might find the life that You offer. Well, go ahead and grab your seat with me for a moment. And maybe just go ahead and get comfortable for a second. You see, RE, the whole point is just a three-day encounter with God. It's about you meeting with God. An experience and an encounter with the living God who is here and wants to move in your life. And some of us, we might have end-of-the-year and the beginning of a new year, reflections and times and going through journals and different kinds of stuff. And a lot of us don't, but there's something about slowing down and just kind of like, "Okay, where am I and how do I need to respond to God? What is He saying to me?"

So you just close your eyes, get comfortable with me. I'm going to ask you three questions for you to just process with the Lord for a few minutes each. The first question is really simple. It's just simply this: What do you need to celebrate from 2023? What do you need to celebrate? Which means seeing God's goodness in your life and acknowledge it and name it and thank God for it. '23 might've been a hard year. It might've been a long year. It might've been a disruptive year. And yet God's goodness was all over your life. So, let me give you two or three minutes to just look at your life.

Holy Spirit, show us what we can celebrate from Your patience to Your kindness. Maybe it's forgiveness, God's compassion. Maybe it's provision. Maybe it was blessing. What do you need to celebrate from 2023?

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever. Celebrating isn't always natural for us, but when we take time to do it, you'd be amazed at how you see God's goodness all over your life. Second question I want to ask you is: What do you need to leave behind in 2023? What no longer has any place in your future and yet you're still carrying it? What do you need to leave behind? Maybe it's an offense.

Maybe it's a preference. Maybe it's an opinion or an expectation. Maybe it's a sense of need that you thought you had, but you really don't. Maybe it's frustration. Maybe it's a broken relationship. Bitterness, resentment, sin, an addiction. Some anxiety, depression. I don't know. Holy Spirit, would You just come and show us what has no place in our future and yet we're still carrying it? And can you name it and say, "Jesus, have this." Because I don't want to carry this into my future anymore. What do you need to leave behind?

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. One of the greatest gifts God loves to receive from you are things that you need to leave behind. Because they belong to this world and they have no part of your future. And then, the third question I want to ask you is, what do you want to ask God for? He says, "Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the

door will be open. Therefore, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it shall be yours."

You have not because you asked not. What are the dreams? What are the desires? What are the needs? Or are there places of provision or breakthrough where you're like, "I not only want God, I need God to move here." Ask Him. He loves to hear your heart.

In Jesus' name, we start this year celebrating God's goodness in our lives. In Jesus' name, we leave behind the things that want to follow us into the future, but have no place in the resurrection life. And in Jesus' name, we ask with a bold faith, with courage because whatever we ask for in His name, the Father longs to give to us.

So, we say, "Jesus, have it all." You see, the theme verse that we really feel like for this year's RE, it's just this simple little verse that says, "For the kingdom of God, it's not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." God's kingdom is not eating and drinking. In other words, God's kingdom is not religious activities. It's not religious duty. It's not obligation and service and striving and struggling, can and can't, should and shouldn't, do and don't. No. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy. And when we know we've been made right with God, we will have peace. And when we have peace, our life will be full of joy. And righteousness, peace, and joy are not available to you through the flesh. They are only available to you through the Spirit. And so, for these three days, we're just kind of walking through righteousness, then peace, then joy, because there's an order.

If you don't have joy, you've probably lost your peace. If you don't have peace, you've probably forgotten that you've been made right with God through Jesus. And this is what the Spirit wants to remind us of. You say, "Righteousness, big word. What does it mean?" It just means right standing with God. It just means you and God are right. You're in right relationship. You're approved. You're accepted. It's goodness, that you and God are good. Because there is now an inward goodness inside of you through the finished work of Jesus. This is why it says, "God made Jesus, who had no sin, to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the very righteousness of God." In other words, Jesus was separated from God. He was made distant from God. He took all of our sin, and all of our shame, and all of our brokenness, and all the things that keep us away from God.

He took upon Himself that we might become right, with God, once and for all. "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." See, the best thing about righteousness is that righteousness comes from God, apart from the law. In other words, you don't do it. You don't earn it. You don't deserve it. You can't get it. You can't maintain it. It's a righteousness from God that comes through faith in Jesus. When I believe in Jesus, who He is and what He has

done, I become right with God forever and always. Me and God are good. Not because I fulfill the law or do religious things or get it all right. But because of what Jesus has done.

And there is no difference. In other words, it doesn't matter if you think you're better than the people around you or worse than the people around you. It doesn't matter what 2023 looked like and it doesn't matter what 2024 looks like. If you have faith in Jesus, righteousness from God is a part of your life. "For if by the trespass of one man, death reigned through that one man. How much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ?" Reign in life. Anyone want to reign in 2024? Anyone want to have a successful, prosperous, blessed, life-giving, really good year in 2024? Okay. Well, if I want to reign, then what's the secret? To receive by grace the gift of righteousness.

Not earn, not try, not strive. No, receive by grace the gift of right relationship with God because of Jesus once and for all that me and God are good. And you can't help but reign in life because if you're good with God, who cares when that circumstance is hard? When you're good with God, who cares if that situation is off? When you're good with God, who cares if things aren't going the way that you want to? I am good with God. Therefore, I can reign over this thing in the here and now. "This is the name by which He will be called, the Lord, Our Righteousness." In fact, He even says, "My name is the Lord, your righteousness." The Lord is our righteousness. You are not your righteousness. Your behavior, your effort, your striving, your struggles, your failures, your victories.

Your amazing and your awful. Your highlight reel and your dumpster fire. It's not your righteousness. Jesus is your righteousness. And if the Lord is our righteousness, then this verse has so much life to it. "There is then now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." There is no condemnation because I've been made right with God once and for always. Condemnation, to be accused, found guilty and deserving of punishment. And if there's no condemnation, that means there's no self-condemnation. There's no religious condemnation. There's no demonic condemnation. And there is no God condemnation. Why? Because in Jesus, I've been made right with God through the Spirit of the living God.

See, what if today is an interlude in your life? You know what an interlude is? An interlude is an intentional pause between acts of a play. Act one, then there's an interlude, an intentional pause before we go on to act two. The biblical term for this would be the word "selah." If you've ever read through the Psalms and you see the word "selah" show up at these different points, it means breath, break, pause. Why is there a selah? And why are there interludes in things? Because sometimes, we need to stop. Breathe it in and reflect, and change our mindset, and be reminded of what's actually happening and what actually matters.

So, what if today, what if RE day one 2024 was an interlude or a selah in the acts of your life? What if 2023 before we move on to 2024, God is inviting you to have an intentional pause to

stop, to breathe, and to remind yourself that you are right with God? What if today is just an interlude where God's saying, "Hey, I know. I know you got all these New Year's resolutions. And I know you got all these goals. And I know you got all these plans. And I know you got a lot of "behave better" and "try harder" and "do more." And this is going to be the year you're going to get fit. You're going to do your finances right. You're going to do vacations, and your family's going to be good. And you're not going to do that addiction anymore and your mind's going to be free. And you got all these things, all these resolutions. What if God was just saying, "Hey, before we do all that, can we just have an interlude?"

An intentional pause between the acts of your play, of your life, of your story so you can breathe, and remind yourself that you're right with Me." How different would your life be this year if you really believed you were right with God? You might have been walking with God for 50 years. You still need to be reminded that God is good with you because of Jesus. Wouldn't that change how you do this year? If you really believed you were right with God, think of how much less fear you would have in your life. Think of how much less you would care about what other people think about you. If you really believed you were right with God, think how free your mind would start to become. Think how that anxiety and that depression would just start to go away.

Think of how you would not worry about the outward conforming or this inner critic inside of you. I mean, so much of your life, you wouldn't be worried about the lists and the performance, and the striving, and the struggling. And "I got to" and "I always" and "it never" and "I can." Okay, okay. Interlude, interlude. Selah. I'm good with God. I'm good with God. Actually, God is good with me. That's what matters. Doesn't even matter if I'm good with God. God's good with me because of Jesus. And so, that changes everything. What if today was an interlude of righteousness in your life? So, you can move into the next act with a big faith and a profound freedom. And not only is God good with you. "The Lord your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with His love and he will rejoice over you with singing."

That's a verse. Some of us think, "Yep, I'm just at the bare minimum, me and God. Okay. We're right in Jesus." No, no, no. He rejoices over you with singing. Can you hear the song of your interlude? Can you hear the song of selah? It's a song that God Himself is singing over your life. A song of victory, destiny, and love, and freedom, and goodness. In Jesus' name. So, at all of our campuses, our teams are going to pass out communion. There's nothing better than starting a year with communion and reminding ourselves of the righteousness we have in Jesus. And all this is, is a cracker and some grape juice and as it gets passed around, this is for anyone who has put their faith in Jesus.

And if it gets to you and you're here and you're still seeking, you're trying to check out who Jesus is and what this is all about, when it gets to you, maybe today is your day to say, "I believe. I believe that Jesus is who He says he is and did what He said he did. And so, I take

Jesus as my righteousness. My right standing with God." And if not, that's okay. We would just ask you to pass it along until the day where you're ready for that. You see, I've been thinking about this this week and I really like this. Every time we take communion, communion is an interlude of our life. Every time we take communion, communion is *selah* in our life. It's an intentional pause between the acts, the chapters, the realities of our life to remind ourselves what matters.

And we stop and we pause and we breathe and we break. And we remind ourselves that we don't have to do it all. That we're not in control. That we don't have to make it happen. That I don't have to earn God's favor because I already have it. And I was thinking about the fact that we pass out communion. Isn't it interesting that communion is literally served to you? Why? Because righteousness isn't something you get up and go get and make yourself happen. No. The gift of righteousness is something that is literally brought right to you in Jesus' name. And you get the choice to receive it or make it pass by.

That's killer. You don't even earn receiving the righteousness. It's literally brought right to you. The only question is, how do you want to respond? What would it be like if you started this year really believing that God is good with you because of Jesus? How different would act two of your play be in this season? What I love about the gospel is it's so simple and yet so profound.

And it humbles the proud, brings down the wise, breaks through all the religion. All the looking for more, say it in a different way. Give us something we've never had before. Jesus says, "As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of Me." Like this is the thing. And nothing matters more. You see, on the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread and He broke it. He said, "This is My body, which is broken for you." And in that moment, He gave the disciples *selah*. An interlude, an intentional pause between the acts of the play to say, "This is My body, which is broken for you. I am making you right with God once and for all."

Can we receive His righteousness together? And in the same way, after the supper, Jesus took the cup saying, "This is the cup of the new covenant. My blood poured out for you. I'm going to be poured out so God's goodness can be poured into you." No matter where you've been, no matter what you do, no matter where you go, no matter what this year looks like, in Jesus, we become the righteousness of God. And that changes everything. Can we receive that we are good with God? That God is good with us because of Jesus. So, thank You, Jesus. That together we get to start this year knowing we are right with You.