

Alright, everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. Before we get started, let's go ahead and welcome all of our campuses. Denton, Lewisville, Gainesville, Flower Mound, Online, wherever you are in the world, let's welcome each other together. Alright, why do we do that? Why do we welcome each other? Because it's not just one of us, it's all of us. One church, multiple campuses, and we carry the hope of Jesus to all the locations we go to every single day. You didn't just come to church today, you came to a people. You came to the people of God and we've been in an amazing last two weeks, we've got a chance to revisit the Hope Carrier Initiative. Man, the Hope Carrier Initiative, it's one of the most important things that God's ever birthed into our family. So I just want to encourage you. It's both a series and a lifestyle. So if you missed any of that, man, I want to encourage you to go back – Created For More, Dream With God, Garden City, The Kingdom of God.

The kingdom within us is always supposed to become the kingdom around us. So in Jesus' name, you are a hope carrier. In Jesus' name, that's who we are and it's who we're going to continue to become and there's been so much hope in the atmosphere recently. We've been hearing amazing stories of families getting reconciled and people being like, "I give up. I need Jesus. I can't do it on my own. I don't want to keep trying to go on my own." We've seen people walk into the waters of baptism. In 2023, we baptized almost 400 people. Now, to put that in perspective, 20 years ago when we were one church at one location, we had about 300 people in the church. So what they took by faith, we get to live in by sight and we're seeing it and we're experiencing it right now. And it is November. We're almost to the end of the year, which is crazy.

So here's my question, as we kind of come into the end of the year, as you think about all the parties and the plans and the presents and everything in front of us, how are you going to end this year? Like, what's it going to look like for you? Because as a church, we have a real clear idea of what God is asking us to do to end this year. A new invitation today for a brand-new series called The Someone Else Challenge: Getting Outside of Ourselves. Life is found when we get outside of ourselves. So from now through Christmas, we're going to take each week to get outside of ourselves, to go from here to out there, from in here to out here. So every single week, we're going to look at something from Scripture, a principle on how to get outside ourselves. Like, maybe it'll be like gratitude and we'll be like, "Hey, so here's what the Scriptures said about gratitude," and you'll be like, "No way," and we'll be like, "Way." And then at the end of that message, we're going to give you a specific challenge to maybe go and be grateful and actually say words of gratitude to someone in your life.

So what we're going to do is we're going to really try to give your desired direction. See, inside of you is a desire to do good. You were made in the image of the One that went around doing good, but sometimes, especially around this time of the year, we don't exactly know the direction to take it. Like, we'll get phone calls from people all the time. "Hey, is there any family that needs anything? Can we help out at all?" And they have this desire to do good. They don't necessarily know exactly how to carry it out. How do they put some direction to it.

So this series will be to you and to your family and your roommates and your friends, but it's not for you, your family, your roommates, and your friends. It's for the "someone else's". It's for the people that are one ring out. The people that are, you know, on your path each day. The people that you interact with. It's the trainer at the gym. It's the attendance clerk at school.

It's for those that you interact with that don't necessarily directly benefit you. You see, when you think about, you're thinking, "Well, I want it for my family." I know, but we talked about family back in the summertime. We talked about how to live as healthy families. We had an entire two months on that. Right now, it's about the "someone else." The someone else. The someone else, so we can get outside of ourselves, why? Because at the end of this year, we can really make it about one of two things; it can be all about myself or it can be all about someone else. And haven't you noticed that, like, selfishness seems to be, like, at an all-time high in the world. Like, have you been to an airport recently? Have you gone out to eat at a busy restaurant? Have you been to a concert? Like, it's just selfishness, man. It's just in us and around us, and it's all over our schedules and our life. Like, it's so easy to build my calendar, my schedule, my time, my week, all about me and my stuff going on. So every weekday leads into the weekend, every weekend leads back into weekdays, over and over and over. It's so easy to ride the crazy train. Doing many of the things that maybe God didn't even ask me to do in the first place.

Finding myself, chasing what society tells me to chase, doing what the world says I should do, making it all about me, myself, and I, and if you hear me say that, you're like, I wish it was me, myself, and I. It's usually about running the kids around and, like, you know, trips to the grocery store. Okay, maybe not me, myself, and I. Maybe we, ourselves, and us, and it kind of just turns out to be the same thing. A self-made, self-induced cycle that's all about me, but in Jesus' name, we're going to get outside ourselves. We're going to take this challenge together and you know what's going to happen as we get outside of ourselves? We're going to get outside of ourselves. Look at this, "Don't merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." It's not just about you, it's also about them, looking out for them.

"Those that refresh others will themselves be refreshed." What a great verse. Here's another translation of that, "The soul that blesses will be enriched, and he who waters will himself be watered." Can I ask you, do you feel dry? Do you feel a little cracked on the inside sometimes? Do you feel like you're wanting to be poured into? Well, there's really only one way that can happen. It's to choose to water other people. To bless, to enrich others, to get outside of ourselves. "Do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Reaping and sowing is not a concept we're really familiar with, but reaping is just to extract or to harvest what you've sown into, what you've invested into, what you've planted and so one of the ways that we're deceived is to think that if we just sow selfishness into our life, we can reap anything other than selfishness. If we sow for, you know, for ourselves and me, myself, and I that we're going to reap anything other than isolation and distrust of people, and disconnection from

others or if we sow in a lack of generosity that we'll reap anything other than a poverty mindset.

Where I'm always just trying to get more, to fulfill, to make it about me. I'm often amazed when people get confused, like, "I feel like nobody's giving me compliments." Well, honestly, if we never sow compliments into other people, we really shouldn't expect to receive that back. If we don't sow patience into people, we shouldn't be surprised when people are super short with us. Why because it's a kingdom principle. It's kingdom in nature. It's sowing and reaping. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over. It'll be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use it, it will be measured to you." Give, so you can give it back. With the measure you use your life, it will be measured back to you. So those are some important kingdom economics to refresh, to be refreshed, to sow, to reap, to give, and it'll be given back to me. Can I just ask you, is that you? Is that you and not just for your friends, roommates, you know, your family. Is that you to the someone else's around you because I'm just telling you, that's not always me. A lot of times it is about me. A lot of times, I don't live in this reality of kingdom economics. I don't give and receive it back, and that's the journey that we're taking together. Look at this verse, this one's killer. "But mark this, there'll be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves." Mark this, take note of it.

Okay, so just to be clear, we're always living in the last days because Jesus is always bringing things into fruition. So if you're watching the news, you're like, "Are we in the last days?" The answer is yes, because Jesus is moving His kingdom forward and the kingdom of the world is winding down and you would think that this verse would say "In the last days, lots of wars around Israel, lots of earthquakes, all kinds of economic disparities" but it says "people will be lovers of themselves." Isn't that fascinating? When you hear that, you might think of, like, a TikTok superstar dressed in designer outfit and like getting all the moves and making all the followers. That's my best TikTok dance. And here's the thing. It might be that, but to be a lover of yourselves means that you are the highest priority. To love is just to seek the highest good of the thing that it loves. So a lot of times, the reason that we live as lovers of ourselves is that we have goodwill towards ourselves at the expense of bad will towards other people.

That is, "I get mine first." "I need it for me." First in line. "I got to do it before you get yours." And these kind of decisions we make find us becoming a lover of myself and so we got to think about that warning, that encouragement, and just ask yourselves, okay, if that's true, if a lot of us live as lovers of ourselves, what's like the antidote to that? Well, the antidote is to choose to be life-giving and so one of the first and foremost, really, beliefs here at Valley Creek is that we are Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, and Life-giving. And so life-giving people are really the opposite of people who are lovers of themselves because life-giving people receive and release the life of Jesus wherever they go. They receive the life of Jesus, and then they can release the life of Jesus, and life is found when we get outside ourselves. So one of the parts of this principle that's really important is to understand, I can't receive more until I've released

what I've already been given. So think of like, a water hose or a pitcher of water, or really anything that holds water. It must release the water that's inside of it in order to receive more back. If not, the thing stagnates, and the water stagnates, and it starts to get kind of stinky and if we're really honest with ourselves, our lives get kind of stinky when we hold on to that which we've been given, and we never actually release it to those around us, but life-giving people receive and release, and so they release even more, so they can receive even more. Do you see how that works? So this is really important.

So kingdom mathematics and kingdom multiplication, it makes about as much sense as the federal budget, which is it doesn't make sense. So to receive it, I gotta release what I already have to be refreshed, I gotta refresh others. I gotta keep giving out and so what we're knowing is that this challenge is gonna have to be received by faith. It's not gonna make sense. It has to be beyond that. We have to believe by faith that God is going to give back to us so much more than what we give away to the someone else's around us. What we're gonna try to do during this challenge is, we're gonna try to expand the definition of and our love for our neighbor. The definition of and our love for our neighbor. For God so loved the world, not only Mary and Joseph, that He gave His one and only Son, Jesus, not only to Mary and Joseph, but also to the world.

For God so loved the world, not just immediate family, that He gave Jesus to an immediate family, so He would then love the world, give Himself up for the world. And so we're trying to try to expand our definition of and our love for our neighbors, and one of the very best ways that that happens in the Scripture is when Jesus starts to talk about the story The Good Samaritan. Maybe you're familiar with that story, but a lot of us don't remember how the story starts. Check this out. "On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus." Dumb. "'Teacher,'" he asked, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'"

Okay, so his premise is wrong right off the bat. He's saying, what must I do? Listen, it's not about what we have to do, it's about what Jesus has already done and in this case, it wasn't about what Jesus has already done, it's what Jesus was currently doing right then and there as He had the conversation with him. So Jesus hears the question, and then like He usually does, He asks the question back to him, and He says, "Well, how do you read it? What do you think that it says?" "He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourselves.' 'You've answered correctly,' Jesus replied, 'Do this and you will live.'" So can I ask you, do you feel alive right now?

Like, are you living life or is life living you? Because it gives us insight here that if we want to feel alive, if we want to fully come to life, if Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, then the only way to really live is to actually walk in His way and live in His truth, and His truth leads us to loving God and loving people. And His way is the way of going into the lives of someone else's. And so what this man's trying to do here is he's trying to just ask a question like, "Okay, I

think I know the law, and I think I got it figured out," and then he hears Jesus say, "You've answered correctly," and he's like, "Oh yeah, answered it correctly, totes my goats, got the answer, everybody, okay, I got it." And then he just can't let it be. "But he wanted to justify himself. So he asks Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" Can I just tell you, I think a lot of what we do is that we try to justify ourselves.

We hide behind altruism. "Oh no, I already gave some money to that." We feign ignorance, "Oh yeah, I didn't, I don't know, I didn't even know about it, I wasn't sure," and most of the time, this is the one I'm seeing a lot right now, is we use the phrase, "I can't," to actually hide the phrase, "I won't." We say "I can't do it" in reality, "I just won't do it" because I don't want to, or because I have rebellion in my heart, and I say that I can't. We try to justify ourselves. The man does the same thing. So what he's doing here, is he's trying to, he's trying to ask about like, what's the minimum amount that I can do to love somebody, who's the smallest grouping of people, like what's like my, what is it, like the minimum deposit of the checking account, like what's the smallest amount I can do to make this happen? So he's thinking like, "I just really want to love like, my family, and those that I like, and those that look like me, and those that agree with my political persuasion, but honestly, Jesus, I really want to limit having to love the people that are really hard to love. So who's my neighbor? Can I just, can we kind of just clarify that?" And as soon as he does it, man, he set it up for Jesus. That's a Texas Ranger fastball coming right down the middle. So Jesus decides to tell him a story. It's called The Good Samaritan.

Let me set it up for you just a little bit. So it's about 18 miles from Jerusalem to Jericho. They are 18 treacherous miles. Modern day, it's Jerusalem to the West Bank. And so the Jews in Jerusalem and the Samaritans in Jericho had massive animosity towards each other. Think like Jews and Palestinians, everything that's going on right now. It is going on then. Also and so Jesus wants to set up a story, and He wants to frame it in a way where this guy knows exactly what to expect, or does he? So one day, a man is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. When he is robbed, he's stripped, and he's left half-dead on the side of the road. Right around then, a priest comes by, sees the man, and chooses to walk to the other side of the road. So too, a Levite sees the man lying there half dead, and he also walks on the other side of the road and passes him by. Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him and going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine, and he bandaged them, and he put the man in his own donkey, and he took him to an inn where he took care of him.

Now listen, this man had a really clear sense of what a Samaritan was and who they were and it didn't match this story. This, like, blew up his paradigm of the someone else's and of how to treat the someone else's in our life. And so what do we see here, seeing compassion, soothed wounds, healing, bandaged, took what he had to take care of. You know what we see? We see grace. Really what this is a story of grace. Grace, undeserved favor. When you get what you don't deserve and so this man gave grace to the man that was half-dead, lying on the side of

the road. Now, initially when we think about this story, you'd think to yourselves, well, a priest and a Levite, they would normally be considered gracious people, right? So their jobs are to do temple work and to lead people into the presence of God, and then they have to interact with people in a gracious way, and so when you first hear this story, you're like, wait a minute, the priest and the Levite walked by the guy when he was half-dead? Those monsters, how could they? What was wrong? And I'll just tell you, I don't think it's that they were being mean. I think it's that they were busy. They were busy. They had things to do. They were probably looking at their cell phone. They were reading scrolls. They were scrolling, if you will. Scrolling.

Man, they were busy. They had temple work to do. They had places to go. They got mortgages to pay. They got lawns to mow. They got activities on the weekend, and so they just couldn't slow down. So they didn't see the man and they didn't feel compassion for him and they didn't do anything to try to heal him, and they certainly couldn't take the time to take him anywhere and where they just couldn't be bothered. In preparation to talk with you guys, I got to thinking about my Grandpa Peterson. My Grandpa Peterson, when I was 10 years old, he always seemed so slow. We would go somewhere, and he'd be like 15 paces behind us. And do you know what he'd be doing? He'd be sitting on a park bench talking to somebody. Or he'd be opening that door for that single mama. Or he'd be grabbing groceries and helping somebody out. Honestly, he was just being Jesus to people. When I think back on that, I just, now as an adult, I can see it and I see it with a completely different perspective. He was just being Jesus.

He saw with compassion. He would go to them. He would use what he had to help them out and to engage them and interact with them and one of my fears is we've probably reached a time as a people in which conversations are seen as interruptions. You know what's one of the most painful parts of The Good Samaritan story is that the priest and the Levite saw the man as an object to go around instead of a person to walk to. And is that that much different than us? Have we reached the point as a society where our goal is to make the least amount of eye contact, speak the fewest words, engage face to face as little as possible. Have we reached the point in which friendly conversations are seen as interruptions? You see, The Good Samaritan wasn't too busy. He was purposeful. Reverse it. We're not purposeful because we think we're too busy. Can I just encourage you on this? I encourage you to stop saying the phrase, "I'm too busy."

"As a man thinks in his heart, so he is." I've been saying this a lot recently also, we need to just stop saying, like, "How are you feeling today?" and start saying, "How are you thinking today?" because how you think will literally change the course of your life. As a man thinks in his heart, so he is, and so I always have the time to live the life and to love the people that God has called me to, the someone else's around me. A lot of why we don't get outside ourselves, I don't think it's intentional. In fact, I don't think it's intentionally anything at all, but the problem is the lack of intentionality not being mean is not the same as being kind, and it certainly isn't the same as showing grace. So it's not a lack, it's not that we're trying to be mean, it's our lack

of intentionality that really is leading us away from the one another's, the someone else's in our life. So who's your neighbor? Like right now, modern day.

Well, let me give you a few ideas. It's that person driving down the road acting a fool. It's the teacher that's not very communicative regarding your kid's missed assignment and by the way, don't get mad at that teacher and go back to your child and ask them why they missed the assignment. It's the server that's having the worst day ever at work and just needs somebody to see her and interact with her and show her some compassion. You see, people are not your enemy. People are not an inconvenience. They are not an interruption. They are God's special creation and they're your life's mission. They're the reason for which Jesus came. Those are people. Those are the someone else's. Can you imagine what it would look like if everybody in the world who actually loves Jesus would begin to show the grace of Jesus to the someone else's around them? "But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." Grace has been given, so we can give it to others.

That is, in Jesus' name, you've been given grace, so you can give grace to the someone else's in your life, to the others in your life. God's been kind to you so that you can be kind to the someone else's in your life. In Jesus' name, God's been compassionate to you, so you can show compassion to those in your life, those around you, in your path, in your day, the someone else's you interact with all the time. So, do you want to know what this week's challenge is going to be? Okay. Next time you're driving around town, look for somebody who's half-dead lying on the side of the road. No, that is not the challenge, okay. The challenge as we kick things off is this. We're going to give you one week to slow down so that you can slow down and decide to engage the someone else's challenge. One week to just settle your heart and settle your life. For most of us, our life is like an 18-wheeler going so fast that if we even tried to make that adjustment, whole thing would crash, Amazon boxes would be all over the place, it'd just be a disaster, but listen, you can't release grace at high speeds.

You can't release grace at high speeds. The Good Samaritan was walking at a pace that he could actually see the man. So we're going to give you one week to really choose to go with us from now to Christmas on The Someone Else Challenge, taking each challenge every single week. Here's the most ironic part about The Good Samaritan story. When we hear the story, we think that we're The Good Samaritan. We're not The Good Samaritan. We're the man lying half-dead on the side of the road. Jesus is The Good Samaritan. "Then a despised Samaritan," Jesus despised, a man of sorrow familiar with our suffering, "A despised Samaritan came along and when he saw us with his eyes of compassion, He came to us. He moved into our neighborhood full of grace and truth. He came into our situation. He got in our mess and He began to heal us and by His wounds we are healed. By the stripes on His back, we are healed." What does He do? "He heals us with olive oil and wine, the Holy Spirit and His blood and He bandaged us and He continues to heal us by His word and His ways, and He puts us on His own donkey." The same donkey He rides into Jerusalem on at the end of His life. Yeah that

one, He's carrying us on His finished work. What He has done, how He has finished the work
"And He took him to an inn."

Jesus says, "In My Father's house there's many rooms. I'm gonna go there and prepare a place for you. If it were not so, I wouldn't tell you that." And He took care of him. "My God will meet all my needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus and surely I'm with you to the very end of the age." While you were lying half-dead on the side of the road, an enemy of God, foreign, in opposition to him, He came. He saw you. You know who passed by you, a priest and a Levite. Religion and the world, and they couldn't give you anything, and they didn't stop to help you, and there was nothing that they could offer. But Jesus did. The Good Samaritan did. And He did all this for you. One more Good Samaritan passage, "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people and it teaches us to say no to ungodliness, to worldly passions, to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age. While we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself up for us to redeem us from all wickedness to purify for himself, a people that are his very own eager to do what is good." A people that are eager to do what is good. A people that are willing to take The Someone Else Challenge.

Jesus is The Good Samaritan. He appeared and He's offering everything we'll ever need. He's given us everything we could ever want and He's actually, He's healing us from our ungodliness and our worldly passions to help us live self-controlled and godly lives. He gave himself up for us. So that we can begin to do the same for the someone else's around us. In Valley Creek, He's creating a people that are His very own. A people that are eager to do what is good. So catch it, Jesus took the Father's Someone Else's Challenge. You were the someone else's and now He's laid it out for us from now through Christmas, from now to Christmas, to step into this challenge, to step into this opportunity, to get one ring out to see, to really see with eyes of compassion, a heart that wants to serve, a willingness to slow down for the someone else's around us. Thank You, Jesus, for this opportunity, and thank You, Jesus, that You took The Someone Else Challenge for us. So come on church, let's step into it by faith, let's do this, it's all of us stepping into The Someone Else Challenge with Jesus. Would you pray with me?

So God, would You just, would You help us? Would You help us step in to these next two months full of faith and to get outside of ourselves? To move from the selfishness we see and we experience in our own life and in society all around us to see You and what You've done and how you stepped out of heaven and came down? How You stopped along the road and You picked us up. How You were the one that had every reason to pass us by and yet, You used what You had and You took care of us. Would You help us do the same? Would You help us get outside of ourselves so that we might live? We're going to believe by faith that life is found when we get outside ourselves. Jesus, help us get outside ourselves. Help us move into a posture of compassion to the someone else's around us. Help us take this challenge by faith. And I can't wait to see how we're going to be refreshed, how we're going to reap a harvest of righteousness, how we're going to experience all the life you have for each one of us. Thank

"Pace of Grace" | The Someone Else Challenge
November 5, 2023 | Pastor Jason Hillier

You, Jesus, for You, Your church, the next steps You're inviting us to and that You are so good to us. In Jesus' name, Amen.