

Pastor Jason Hillier: Once again, welcome to Valley Creek on this special weekend. Valley Creek is one church that meets in multiple campuses. We carry the hope of Jesus to thousands of locations. Hope is here, everyone is welcome, and Jesus changes everything. Go ahead and do me a favor. Go ahead and find your seats for just a second. My name is Jason. I get to serve as the Campus Pastor here. If this is your first time with us, man, I'm glad you're here today. Welcome to this special Baptism Weekend. I want to invite you, sometime in the service, if you can scan that QR code right in front of you, you can learn a little bit about who Valley Creek is. We'd love to learn about you and start a conversation.

But, you came to an amazing weekend because this weekend across all of our campuses, we get to celebrate 179 people getting baptized, which is just amazing. In this service, the one that you're currently in, take a bit of a breath because we're going to watch 48 of those people go into the waters of baptism. What is this? What are we doing? Well, baptism is an outward symbol of an inward change. Baptism is when the people walk into the water, say, "I'm going to identify with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection, because I've made Jesus Lord and I'm going to follow Him." Baptism isn't so much that you're being saved. It's not that at all. It's that you're telling everybody in the world, "I am. I am saved. Jesus is Lord. I am following Him." There's so many things that God does that's amazing. One of those is that God is just good at being good. Another one of those is that God finds things that are lost and He brings them home. He finds them.

Another thing is that God takes broken things and He repairs them. Another thing is that Jesus makes all things new. Check this out. In 2 Corinthians 5, "Therefore, if anyone's in Christ, he's a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." We're celebrating people being made new today, a new identity. No longer are they defined by their past. No longer are they just a sinner saved by grace; they are now the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. No longer are they an orphan of this world; they're a beloved son or daughter in whom the Father is well pleased. No longer are they hopeless; because they have a brand new identity that's full of hope, that's hope declared over their life. They've got a brand new relationship with God. They've been reconciled back to God. They can approach God confidently knowing that His presence is always with them and He's for them. They've got a brand new purpose. They get to live a life of purpose as a hope carrier, carrying the hope of Jesus wherever they go to whoever they meet. Jesus changes everything.

Jesus makes old things new. Here's what you're about to see in just a second. In just a second, there's going to be two people that'll walk into every tank, one getting baptized and one doing the baptizing. Just to be really clear, there's nothing really special about the water. It comes from a garden hose. It is set to a very balmy 98 degrees. Nothing special about the water, but there's something amazingly special about obedience. There's something beautiful about following Jesus. These are steps of faith and they're steps of obedience. Jesus cares so much about obedience, so much about baptism. It's actually the last thing He talks about before He leaves earth. Check out what He says, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded to you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Therefore, go and make disciples. What is a disciple? It's a student. It's a learner. One who becomes like the one they follow.

Many of the people doing the baptisms, they have discipled these people into the waters and the people getting baptized are like, "I'm going to follow. I'm going to be a student. I'm going to learn from Jesus." Go and make disciples of all nations. When they're in the water, they're going to declare that Jesus is Lord and they will follow. That's what disciples do. They say, "Jesus is Lord, I'm not. I'm going to start following Him." Then the person that's baptizing them is going to say, "Well, then I baptize you in the name of..." Just to be really clear, contained in the name of God are all the realities of God and His kingdom. There is power in His name. There is life in His name. There is healing in His name. There is hope in His name. The people getting baptized are going to wear the name of Jesus like a banner over their life. They're going to wear the name of God over their life from this point onwards. Baptized in the name of the Father. "In the name of the Father," means you've got a spiritual family. "In the name of the Father," means that God is a good Father and you can trust Him.

You've got a new spiritual home to be a part of. "In the name of the Son," means that you are now righteous like Jesus is righteous. Meaning you have right standing with God. "In the name of the Holy Spirit," means you walk in the power of the Spirit. You're filled with the Spirit. You have His power to carry you through life. You've got His character to help you walk like Jesus walked. Live like Jesus lived. All three of those things are so important. Father, Son, Holy Spirit is how we're baptized. Then, it goes on to say, "teaching them to obey," meaning the people that are stepping into the waters, they're just at the beginning. They're just learning how to obey. Learning how to follow Jesus. But, they're on this journey and it's a beautiful journey. "Surely I am with you," God calls Himself the great I Am. "I Am with you." God is with them. From this point onwards, no matter what comes with them in life, no matter what they face, they know that God is with them. Surely to the very end of it, to whatever happens, God walks with them.

That's how we baptize and that is why we do it. That is powerful. That is worth celebrating. I'm going to ask you to go ahead and stand back up with me. I'm going to invite those that are getting baptized to get ready to come into the waters. Go ahead and start moving, making your way into the tanks. All right, so Valley Creek, here's how we baptize. At Valley Creek, we say all that "Jesus, Lord, I will follow." "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit." Then, every time they come out of that water, we celebrate it. We go for it. We cheer for them. Because all of them are somebody's somebody. All of them are the person that somebody wants more than anyone to step in, and just be like, "I want to follow Jesus and He's going to be my Lord." It's moms, it's sons, it's grandmas, it's friends, it's your people and it's their people. They're all worth celebrating, all 48 of them in this service. I want to just

encourage you, don't slow down, don't grow weary, don't grow tired, because all of heaven rejoices when one person repents and comes to Jesus.

All of heaven rejoices when one person says yes. We also believe that the Lord rejoices over them with singing. We do the very same thing. We literally worship over them. We declare heaven over them. We sing over them. We cheer for each one because God is celebrating with their transformed life. Okay, Valley Creek, it's time to celebrate some life change. It's time to celebrate Jesus. It's time to celebrate some baptisms. Here we go.

Pastor John Stickl: What a great day, 179 people who said, "Jesus is Lord and I will follow." We just got to celebrate with all of heaven as 179 people just went from death to life, included in Christ. They have been rescued and brought into the kingdom of God.

179 people's destinies have been restored in Jesus' name. This is what a movement of hope for the city and beyond looks like. Remember, that's who we are. That's our vision, to be a movement of hope for the city and beyond; to raise up generations of hope carriers by helping people take next steps on their journey with Jesus. This is why we do what we do. This is why we give. This is why we serve. This is why we create culture. This is why we build and create and try to connect with one another. All of those things to contribute to creating environments and atmospheres and experiences, where individuals can find the hope of Jesus. If you're here and you've never put your faith in Jesus, can I ask you, is today the day?

Is today the day that you say, "Hey, I need a Savior, and I need someone to rescue me from my past, from my present and my future, and I want to be a part of the kingdom of heaven." The Bible says that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. Maybe today is your day of salvation. If you're here and you have put your faith in Jesus, but you've never been baptized, can I ask you a question? What are you waiting for? What are you hoping for? You see, being baptized is simply just saying Jesus is my Lord. He's my teacher. I've been included in Christ. The old me is gone and I've risen to a new life in Him. Maybe today is the day you say, "I'm ready to take that next step. I'm going to move forward. The next time there's baptisms, I'm getting baptized because I want to be fully included in Christ."

If you're here and you have put your faith in Jesus and you're a disciple of Jesus, can I ask you this question? When was the last time you invited someone to come and taste and see how good God is? If you're a follower of Jesus, like when was the last time you personally invited someone to church? When was the last time you brought someone here? When was the last time you interceded for someone, contended for someone? When was the last time you were working on someone else to come and see and experience the goodness of God? You have to remember that the Gospel moves from person to person, from life to life. It's how God designed it.

He has created us to be His witnesses; to go out and tell people what we have seen and heard, and say, "Come and see how good God is and what He has done in my life. I believe He can do that same thing in your life." You see, we have to remember that we are a missional people, that the whole reason Valley Creek Church exists is to bring the hope of Jesus into the city around us through one person at a time, through your life into other people's lives. Our vision is clear, and our mission is urgent and we must remember why we exist. We must remember to step outside of ourselves. On days like today where we see 179 people go from death to life, it reminds us that God is on the move and we have a privilege of being a part of it. You just close your eyes with me for a moment. Let me just ask you today, in the midst of all of this celebration and all of this life and all of what God is doing, what is He saying to you?

For so many of you today, I think God is just reminding you that there is hope. There's hope in the name of Jesus. For others of us, I think He is stirring up the coals of mission. He's stirring up the embers of revival. He's stirring up that sense inside of us that we're a part of something bigger than ourselves and that it's so easy to get lost in our own life and our own activities and our own busyness that we forget that God has placed people all around us. Can you just take a moment for a second and just think of, who is one person in your life that needs the hope of Jesus? Can you picture them? Can you think of their name?

Maybe it's a coworker, a person you sit with at lunch at school. Maybe it's your neighbor, an extended family member. Maybe it's that person you see at that same shop over and over again, and they've just caught your attention. What if you just said, "Lord, would You give me the courage and the boldness to just invite them into this place to come and taste and see how good You are? God, would You help me be used by You to reach them in some way? You tell us that we plant and we water, but You make it grow. Would You help me plant and water in their life, believing that You're going to make it grow?"

Jesus, right now, I pray for all those people we just pictured in our minds with these tanks of baptism sitting right here in front of us. We, just by faith, believe and declare that one day we will see them go through these waters of baptism, raised from death to life because we are on mission with you. Give us the courage to just invite them to just come into this place and be touched by You. God, I pray that You'd stir up the embers of revival, the coals of mission, that You would remind us of why we're here and why we exist, that we might step outside of ourselves because this is a lost, lonely, and broken world, and You have chosen to seek and save the lost through us. You've chosen to seek and save the lost through me, and may we each remember that. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Hey, I am so glad that you are here with us on this celebration baptism weekend.

Service got done a little bit shorter today, and so we have cookies and coffee for you in the atrium. Let me encourage you, don't just take off, take some time. Go out there, meet somebody you've never met before. God has amazing people in this church for you to connect to. For those of you that want to give, you can give at all the boxes on your way out or online

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at valleycreek.org. Our giving allows us to do all this and see people's lives be changed. As you go this week, may you go knowing that God is good, that Jesus has forgiven me, that I am loved, and everything is possible in Jesus' name. I love you. Have a great week.