

All right. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. Come on, whatever campus you're at today, Denton, Flower Mound, Lewisville, the Venue, Online, Gainesville, wherever you are in the world, can we just welcome each other together for a moment? We are so glad you're here. I'm so glad you're here. I'm so grateful for you. I'm grateful for who you are. I'm grateful for the journey that we're on. I'm grateful for how God is moving in us, among us, and through us. God is doing a new thing in a new way. It is a great season to be a part of this family on mission. We've been in this season simply called the Hope Carrier Initiative. We've been taking some extended time to just talk about, what does it look like to change your world? What does it look like to live on mission with God?

What does it really mean to be a disciple, to live in the midst of the kingdom of God, in the midst of our daily lives? God's been moving, and He's been speaking, and we've prayed for this, and we've prepared for this. We've been in this for a little while. We started it in January, and we're probably going all the way to Memorial Day. Let me just go ahead and tell you, this is probably where we are. Because God's stirring some things up, and He's moving. We want this to get so into the fabric and the fiber and the ethos of who we are as a people. What I want us to do is I just want to, kind of, get everybody back on the same page, for new people who have joined us along the way. Let's just kind of like, recalibrate. Like, what are we talking about? What does this all mean? Let's just get on the same page. We've said just a hope carrier is simply a disciple of Jesus living on mission to change their world – a disciple, a learner, a follower, a student, one who becomes like the one they're following.

Someone who is learning to think like, talk like, act like, believe like, and live like Jesus. Someone who's learning to do the things He did, the way that He did them, where He did them, and how He did them. Someone who is an apprentice, practicing the way of Jesus. Who doesn't just see Jesus as Lord and Savior, but also sees Him as teacher of their life. Living on mission, seeking and saving that which was lost, partnering with God to see His kingdom come, and His will be done in the here and now to change their world. Not the world out there, but my world right here. What we've been saying is, is that you can change your world to the level you are a disciple. You are empowered to the level that you're surrendered.

The kingdom of God only flows through a surrendered will. The kingdom within you will eventually become the kingdom around you. When we live as disciples and allow God to change my internal world, I then am empowered to change my external world. What we've been saying is that the kingdom of God is a movement of hope. That the kingdom and the church are not the same thing. The church is a part of the kingdom of God, but the kingdom is so much bigger. It's the rule and reign of God. It's where things are submitted and surrendered to the lordship of Jesus. It's where God's will is done. God doesn't just want His will done in the church, He wants it in every area of life – family, education, healthcare, business, government, arts and media, sports, technology, the places you and I go every single day. The church is simply the people of God that God wants to release His kingdom through.

It's gathered disciples, living on mission together. Jesus says that we as the church, as disciples, we're like salt, light, and leaven.

Salt – meant to bring taste to a flavorless world. Light – meant to shine in pitch-black darkness to show people the way. Leaven, yeast – meant to be sprinkled into the world to cause all things to rise. Jesus says, "All authority on heaven and earth has been given unto Me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations." He says, "I have been given say over all things, so go and make disciples over all nations." It's the word "ethnos," people groups; not just countries, but the people groups that we're in every single day. He says, "You're to be in the world, but of the kingdom." In the world, but having a different nature, a different origin, a different set of values, a different reality that you carry into those spaces. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is within you.

Contained within the kingdom of heaven are all the answers to all of the world's problems – poverty, disease, divorce, sickness, despair, brokenness. Every divine solution that the world needs is in the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is within you as a follower of Jesus, so when you walk into any of these spaces, hope just walked in the door, because the divine solutions just walked in the door. You literally, the Bible says, radiate hope. A treasure chest of hope is within you and hope is the influencing agent. It doesn't matter what your title is. It doesn't matter what your role is. It doesn't matter who the perceived authority in any of these spaces are. He who has the most hope becomes the influencer in that space. This is what it means to be a hope carrier. Not a hype carrier, a hope carrier that starts from the inside out. You with me on that? If you've been seeing this, you've been seeing this around on a lot of stuff that we've done.

I haven't got to tell it to you yet. You have no idea how many times this was in the slide deck and we just never got there. But this is the new visual language of our church. It's a visual language. You see, vocabulary creates culture, but imagery embodies a dream. Every good leader knows that vocabulary creates culture. That's why they work really hard to create vocabulary words that create an identity, a DNA, a belonging, a set of behaviors that will be created by those vocabulary words. But imagery; imagery embodies a dream. It shows you what can be in the midst of what is. See, our vision, say it with me if you know it, is to be a movement of hope for the city and beyond. A movement of hope for the city and beyond. A movement – our church logo. What's a movement?

When unique individuals submit their gifts, passions, talents, and resources to a common vision for an exponential return. A movement of hope – The Three Circles. Hope is not an emotion, it's not wishful thinking, He's a person and His name is Jesus. There is no hope outside of the living hope. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Change your mind, hope is here and His name is Jesus. For the city and beyond – hope carriers. You are God's outreach strategy. You are the ones that he is sending to the world's cries, the world's problems, the world's misery. A movement of hope for the city and beyond, so I love where we're going. I

love who we're becoming as a people, and I love what God is doing, and I'm grateful in this season. What I want to say to you is, you are in on the ground floor. Everybody wants to be a part of something bigger than themselves. Everybody wants to build something that outlasts themselves.

You are in on the ground floor of this season, of the destiny of this people, in this city, at this time, so let me encourage you. If you've been coming, and you've been checking it out, and you've never said Valley Creek is my church, it's time. It's time. Maybe, let's just trust that this is a word from the Lord for you today. It's time. Go to Join the Movement. Say, "This is my church." I need other disciples, a family on mission, to follow Jesus with and I want to be a part of what God is doing in the here and now. I'm moving from a consumer to a contributor. I don't want to spectate. I want to get in the game in Jesus' name. Okay. Here's what we've been doing in this series. I know a lot of you are smart and you've picked it up by now. The best way I know how to say it to you is we're looping. We teach a little bit and then we go back and we loop. We go a little farther and then we go back and we loop; then we go a little farther and we go back and we loop. Some of you that are here every week, you're like, "Dear Lord, do we have to loop?"

The answer is yes, because not everybody is here every week, number one. But number two, hearing it one time doesn't mean that your soul grabs a hold of it. This stuff is so important that we've got to get it into the ethos, the foundation, the very fabric of who we are as a people. Faith comes by hearing, so we have to keep hearing the big idea as we move forward together. What I want to do is just start with the loop of where we left off last time, talking about the gospel of the kingdom. We said that the gospel of the kingdom is so much more than getting saved, so you can go to heaven when you die. No, no, no. It's about living in the kingdom of heaven in the here and now; not the then and the there, the here and the now. It's The Three Circles, which honestly, for those of you that have been around here, you're like, "Oh, my gosh." Listen, trust me, most people sitting around you right now do not know this. They do not know that the gospel of the kingdom is, Jesus has come so we could receive His grace, experience His presence, and release His kingdom.

They do not know that Jesus came to restore their identity, reconcile their relationship, and redeem their purpose. They just think Jesus came so they'd go to heaven when they die, but it's so much bigger. See, it starts with grace. You have been saved by grace, the Bible says. This is not of yourself, it is the gift of God; not by work, so that no one can boast saved. The word "saved" in the Bible means to save, heal, make whole, set free, deliver. Jesus doesn't want to just forgive your sins so you can go to heaven. He wants to make you whole. He does that by grace, which is undeserved favor and supernatural empowerment. See, grace forgives your sins, but it also gives you a new identity. In Jesus, grace cancels your debt, but it credits your account. It's a favor you didn't deserve, but it's also an empowerment to live a completely new life because you have a completely new identity. The Bible says that when you

put your faith in Jesus, you're included in Christ and everything that's true of Him is now true of you.

1 John 4:17, "As he is, so we are." Because Jesus is righteous, so am I. Because Jesus is loved, so am I. Because Jesus is free, so am I. Because Jesus is holy, so am I. Because Jesus is a beloved Son, so am I. You see, do you remember Jesus' baptism? He goes under the water, he comes up, it says, the heavens tear open and the Father speaks from heaven, "This is My beloved son in whom I am well pleased." He's 30 years old, He hasn't done any miracles yet, and yet the Father declares His identity and His love and that He is pleased in His Son. Do you realize that when you're included in Jesus, you are the Father's beloved son in whom He is well pleased, before you do anything right, and even after you do everything wrong.

You now live under an open heaven and you have nothing to prove. You don't have to spend your life getting the world to say what the Father already has, that you are loved and He is well pleased with you. In fact, you are as loved in this moment as you will ever be in your life, so what are you trying to prove and who are you trying to prove it for? Because Jesus has already proved it on your behalf. It's not about what you have to do, it's about what Jesus has done. I know a lot of us grew up with this little theology of, "I'm just a sinner barely saved by grace." That's great and I understand the intent behind it, but it's just not true. You were a sinner, but you have been saved by grace, which makes you, now, the righteousness of God. It's an identity change. You're either a sinner or you're righteous. You're either under the curse of Adam or the redemption of Jesus. You're either a new creation or you are not.

I know it sounds really good to say that, but don't you think it takes more faith and honors God when we say that we are who He says we are, regardless of how we feel? I know a lot of us think this, you're like, "But if you tell people they're righteous, they're just going to go and sin." First of all, if they're doing that, they're already doing it. Let's not worry about empowering what they're already doing. No, no. The Bible tells us that grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness and live upright, controlled lives in this godly age, telling people who they are frees them from the dirt and sets them free to become the new creation in Jesus. You are more than a sinner saved by grace. You are God's beloved son or daughter, and because of that, you can now experience His presence. You have a reconciled relationship with Him. You can approach the throne of grace with confidence and find mercy in Him. Through faith in Him, we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

In fact, do you realize you can be as close to God as you want to be? You can be as close to God as anyone you know. You can be as close to God as anyone in the Bible. Why? Because Jesus already did it for you. The only distance that exists between you and God is that which you choose, is that which is in here. You are fully known, fully loved, with no fear of rejection, and He who has been forgiven much loves much. In fact, Jesus, the only place that He defines eternal life, says, "This is eternal life that they may know you, God." Know – experience, live in relationship with God, is what He says eternal life looks like. You don't have to wait for eternal

life, eternal life starts now in Jesus' name. As I have this relationship with Him, I move to this place where I start to have a redeemed purpose, start releasing His kingdom.

I start waking up with this boldness, this confidence, this courage that I've been empowered by God to be fruitful and multiply. To make disciples. I have the keys of the kingdom. The kingdom is within me. His spirit is here. All of a sudden, I start realizing He's given me power and authority. Power – the ability to do it. Authority – the right to do it. "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me, therefore go." You now have the right to go and release the kingdom. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." You have the ability to do it. We are God's sons and daughters empowered to release His kingdom. If sin management is the goal of your life, you are in danger of living a drastically inferior life than the one God gave you. If worldly success and personal happiness is the goal of your life, you are in danger of living a drastically inferior life to the one that God has given you. Because where these three things cross, this is the Father's heart, this is the gospel of the kingdom, this is a disciple, this is what a hope carrier looks like.

Here's how these work together. As I receive His grace, I'll experience His presence, and I'll release His kingdom. When I know who I am, I know who God is, and I know what I'm created to do. If I believe I'm a beloved son, I will run to the Father, and I will spend my life building His kingdom. If I believe I'm forgiven, I will never be afraid of God, and I want to be a part of what He's doing. But if I resist His grace, I'll avoid His presence, and I'll build my own kingdom. If I don't know who I am, I don't know who He is, and I have no idea what I'm created to do. If I believe I'm a spiritual orphan, I will be afraid of God, and I will spend my life doing my own thing. If I'm full of shame and condemnation, I will avoid God with everything that I've got, and I will spend my life trying to pay for my past. The problem is, is for a lot of us, we start here and we try to do a bunch of stuff, so God will accept us, so we can pay for our past.

Try harder, behave better, do more, perform, earn, strive, so maybe God will accept you, so maybe, just maybe, He will forgive you and you can finally have significance and acceptance in your life. This is called the cycle of performance and it is an exhausting way to live. But you are not driven by expectations, you are drawn by grace. You don't have to spend your life for approval, you live from approval. You don't have to spend your life for significance, you live from it. You don't have to spend your life for love, you live from it. You have nothing to achieve, to prove, or earn. You have everything to receive, discover, and explore in Jesus' name. This is the gospel of the kingdom, and here is where it gets really good. Identity determines behavior. Who you are determines what you do.

Now, if you've been jumping in the game with us, just one more time. Do it just for me and for no one else. Just help me out, identity determines behavior. Fish swim; birds fly; cows moo; dogs bark; sinners sin; righteous people live righteously; beloved sons and daughters live free in their father's kingdom; disciples learn to live like Jesus; and hope carriers change their world.

A changed identity changes how you live. While we try to change how people behave, God tries to change what people believe. Remember, we said a few weeks ago, to believe something is to act as if it were so. To believe it, I act as if it were so, so my behaviors will always show me what I really believe. Because the reason I behave that way is because I act as if what I believe was so. If you're sitting here and you're like, did you really need to teach this again, here's my question for you.

Do you act as if this is so? It's really easy to say you believe it. It's really easy to say, "I'm a beloved son or daughter." It's really easy to say, "Oh yeah, I believe in the Gospel." Okay, but then do you act as if it were so? Do your behaviors validate that which your lips say you believe? Because if you say you're a beloved son, do you act like it? Or do you act like you believe you're an orphan – hiding, hoarding, hating, poverty mindset, skepticism, worry, stress, fear, offenses, complaining, criticisms? Do you act as if it were so? See, when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, no one has to tell it to stop crawling around in the mud. It acts as if its new identity were so.

It spreads its wings. It begins to fly. Yes, it needs to learn all that what it's capable and how to do it better, but no one has to tell it to stop crawling in the mud because it has a new life and it believes in that new life. It now acts as if it were so into a new lifestyle. When we've been included in Christ, we wake up and we might not know how to do all of it, but all of a sudden we realize sin is no longer my master. I'm no longer controlled by the flesh because I can walk in the Spirit. I've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, it's He who lives within me. I have died and my life is now hidden with Christ, in God. I mean, all of a sudden, you start to act as if it were so. It starts to change what you do and how you live and what it looks like. See, what's really cool is Jesus acts as if this were so because He believes it. Read the Gospels, as we're reading it together in the church.

He acts as if He was a beloved Son – nothing to prove, nothing to earn, no insecurity, totally free. He acts as if His Father was with Him doing and going and saying what the Father was doing. "I and the Father are one," and He acted as if His life purpose was to lay down His life to change the world. The Father believes this. How do I know? Because He acts as if it were so. He treats you as a beloved son, blessing you, loving you, healing you, protecting you, being with you, being for you, giving you all things, giving you His name, giving you an identity. He believes that you and Him have a relationship. He acts as if you were righteous. That's why there's no distance that He has between you and Him. He promises to never leave you, never forsake you; that He will be with you wherever you go. He acts as if it were so that you are empowered with His kingdom, which is why He often steps back and waits for you to do the very thing that He has empowered and commissioned you to do.

Because if He stepped in and did it, He would be acting as if it weren't so. "Oh, but I have to act as if it were so because I believe that you've been commissioned to rule and reign with Me." Are you catching this? For those of you that are newer, right, God is good. Jesus has

forgiven me. I am loved. Everything is possible. We say it at the end of every week. Why? Because this is the core truths of humanity. This is the Gospel. The problem in our life is every behavior we struggle with can be traced back to our unbelief in one of those areas. Everything is possible. Do you act as if it were so? I am loved. Do you act as if it were so? Jesus has forgiven me. Do you act as if it were so? God is good. Do you act as if it were so? See, I think a lot of times we're waiting around for Jesus to come back. "Lord, it's so bad. Come back. Come quickly, Lord Jesus."

He's waiting for us to get to work. We're waiting for God to move, and He's waiting for us to just act as if this were so. I mean, do you remember when Jesus started His ministry? He goes, gets baptized. He goes out into the desert. Forty days. Comes back. Returns in the power of the Spirit. Goes to the synagogue. When He goes into the synagogue, they hand Him the scrolls. He opens it up to Isaiah. This is in Luke 4. This is the passage He picks to read. "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus picks this passage, reads it out loud, and then basically says, "This is my mission statement. This is why I'm here. The Lord has anointed me to preach good news, bind up the brokenhearted, set people free, bring people out of the darkness, and bring the goodness of God's grace into their life."

He says, "This is my mission statement," and then He goes and He lives it. For 3 years, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, providing compassion and grace, and love, and wisdom to people. He goes and He does it. The verse goes on to say, "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations." Who's the 'they'? "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated. They will renew the ruined cities." Who's the 'they'? The 'they' is anyone who has heard the good news, whose broken hearts have been bound up, who has experienced freedom from Jesus, who has been set free from darkness, who has the grace of God active in their life. That's who the 'they' is.

Has God said anything good to you? Has He healed any parts of your broken heart? Has He brought freedom to any area of your life? Has He released you from any darkness and has He given you grace? "Then they" – we, you – "will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they" – we, you – "will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations." When you have been touched by Jesus, you become responsible for the city. That's what this says. When you have been touched by the grace of God in your life, you now become responsible for the city. Why? Because it's The Three Circles. It's the Gospel. You're now a part of the kingdom work. You've been commissioned by God and we have to rethink this whole thing. That was Jesus' mission statement. This is your mission statement. This is the restoration of Genesis 1:28 that we lost in the Garden – to be fruitful and multiply.

Boom! We are responsible to rebuild, to restore, and to renew. We spend so much time complaining about how bad the city is, forgetting we're the ones who have been commissioned to change it. We're like, all sitting around waiting for the government to fix it. We're going to be waiting a long time. We're waiting for an educator to fix it, a business owner to fix it, someone else to fix it. We forget, only we have been given the power and authority, the right and the ability. We look around and we see the ancient ruins. You see the ancient ruins? I do. They're devastating. The ruins of wisdom. The ruins of character. The ruins of integrity. The ruins of honor, and family, and marriage. The ruins of love and joy, and peace and patience and kindness, and goodness, and gentleness.

We see a devastated generation with broken mental health, lost souls, and broken bodies. We look around and we wonder why isn't someone doing something about it? We forget, we're the ones called to rebuild, to restore, and to renew. That, that lot has fallen to us. No one else has the power or the authority to do it. Hear me, you lose the right to complain about that which you don't contribute to. You don't like what's happening in the schools? Then run for the school board. Get on the PTA, be a room parent. You don't like what's happening in your business? Quit complaining about your boss, and just say, "My department/my register/my job site/my team; we're going to do some things different." You don't like what's happening in the city? Dear Lord, do not go on Flower Mound Cares. Ah, ah.

I'm sure other cities have that disaster too. Come on, don't go and complain. Be a part of a people that are saying, "We have to take responsibility for this." Do you complain more or do you contribute more? It's an honest question that you have to ask yourself. I mean, you know that old African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child"? Who raises the village? Who raises the city? Us. I get it, you look at this, and you're like, "Yeah, but I don't even know where to start." Okay. Just start with Joshua. "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Like, in my house, we're going to submit and surrender to the kingdom. In my house, we're going to follow the Lord. In my house, what we say and do and watch and act is going to be in alignment with the kingdom. How do you change a city? Like Nehemiah did. Little by little, one stone at a time, where everyone rebuilt the wall in front of their house. I can't change the world. You're right, but you can change your world.

I can't change the city. You're right, but you can change your part of the city. Here's the question. How are you doing with your mission? You've been created by God and He gave you the mission. You don't get to pick what it is. How are you doing with your mission? What are you rebuilding, restoring, and renewing? Who are you rebuilding, restoring, and renewing? If you don't know, ask God. "God, help me get started." Can I just be real honest with you? One of the things that really grieves me in my role is watching people not make decisions in their life with any regard to the mission of God that He has entrusted to them. I can't tell you how many thousands of students over these years we've watched come through and graduate. When they graduate, them and their families don't sit down and talk about the mission of God in their life.



They just say, "What college do you want to go to?" "What's the alma mater?" "Where's the scholarship?" "Where are all your friends going?" Then, we send them off and they come back devastated and ruined. Why? Because they didn't go with a mission. The mission should be, "What's God called you to do – be a dentist, be a teacher, be a business person? Great. Then, let's get you trained so you can come back and rebuild, restore, and renew the city." It grieves me when I watch families, not like any reference to this and their decision making, but, "We're going to chase some money over here." "We're going to go get this thing over there." There's no thought of mission. Then, they watch as their family falls apart and they lose their children and the marriage is devastated. It grieves me when I watch marriages just say, "We just don't like each other anymore. We just don't want to be together. We just don't get along." This is the mission, though. You're not supposed to be tearing down, damaging, and destroying. You're rebuilding, restoring, and renewing.

We've got to wake up to that we're responsible for the city. Come on. This is why it says, "Seek the peace and the prosperity of the city." "Seek" – passionately pursue the shalom, the comprehensive flourishing – "the prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile." Dear Jesus, people, for the first like, 15 years of my life in Texas, I felt like I was exiled here. At some point in time, you have to wake up and say, "Maybe you don't live where you want to live, but God has put you there for the city, not for you anyways." This is the people of the kingdom exiled to where? Babylon. "Pray to the Lord for it. Seek the Lord on its behalf, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Prosperity is only possible when you spend your life trying to help other people prosper. You with me on this? This is the pattern you find all over Scripture. God touches Moses through the burning bush and then says, "I have seen the misery of My people. I've heard their cry. I am concerned of their suffering. Now go. I'm sending you."

He's sending you. In fact, when Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden... Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Who is the 'you'? He's trying to teach you how to read your own Bible. Who is the 'you'? This is the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus has just preached the kingdom to lost, broken, sick people. He's healed them. He's brought the power of God. Then, he says, "Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who are oppressed. Those who are persecuted. Because you're now part of the kingdom of God, so you now become the salt of the earth and the light of the world." When you've been touched by the grace of Jesus, you become a part of the mission of Jesus.

"Let your light shine that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father." Isn't it interesting that it doesn't say they'll praise you? Why do they praise your Father instead of you? Because when you have the life of God in you, you are so radically different in the way you think, act, believe, and behave, that there is no way it could be through your own strength.

It is the life of God that is so "other" that people see it and they realize it's supernatural in origin. The life of God in you becomes light to them. What does light do? Light helps you figure out where you are, and what to do, and where to go. We use the term "people are lost," and we think that just means they're going to hell. No, "lost" means, "I'm lost. It's dark. I don't know what to do. I don't know where to go. I cannot see. I don't know how to respond. I don't know what is true. I do not know what is real and I do not know what is good."

Then you show up, and the life of God in you becomes light for them so they can see. This is why it says, "In Jesus was life, and that life was the light of man." His life is what lights up the darkness, so we who are lost can see. Can see what is true, and what is real, and what the path is, and what is good, so we can see our way home. This is why Jesus says, "I'm the light of the world. Whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness." What does that mean? It doesn't mean you're not going to go and sin a bunch. It means you're not lost. You're not confused. You're not disoriented. You know what to do, where to do it, how to do it because you have light, so you can see and that light is from His life. When that life is in you, it becomes light to those around you so they don't have to be lost and stumble through this world.

If everything is about going to hell, then everything is about getting saved to go to heaven. Make it bigger than that, so they can find their purpose, and their origin, and their destiny; so they can know God! Come on. Have you ever sat and had a conversation with someone who really walks with God, and when it was done, you could see things so much clearer? What is that? It's the life of God in them that became light to you so you could see what was true, and what was real, and what was good. The question is, when you're around people, does the life of God in you shine through so much that they can see what is true, what is real, and what is good? That's how we help lost people. Lost people is not banging someone over the head saying, "Pray the sinner's prayer."

Let me just free you from that. That is what a hope carrier does. A hope carrier is, "I've shown up and my life is so different, I don't even have to say anything because the life of God in me is literally like a lighthouse." It's like a lamp. It's like a, I don't know, one of those super lumen flashlights that shows people that there's more, so you can't hide your dark. You can't hide your light in darkness. Listen to me. Maybe you're married to a spouse who's lost. I'm not saying lost, going to hell. I'm saying lost. They don't know what to do, where to go, or how to do it. The life of God in you is their light. Maybe you have a child who is lost. They don't know who they are. They don't know what to do. They don't know what life is about. They don't know what is real, what is true, what is good. The life of God in you is their light. Maybe you go to work or have an extended family or go to school and everybody there is lost.

The life of God in you is their light. You with me on that? This is how this all works together. I can't believe it. I broke this message in half and I'm not even close. I'm trying to figure out what to do. It's alright. Just give me a second to think. What a privilege that God would

choose to change the world by putting His life in you, so that you might be His light in all the spaces that you go. Jesus could come and He could just flood the whole world with light; but it would blind everyone and they aren't even looking for it yet, and they don't know they need it.

What does He decide to do? He decides to put it in you as a treasure in a vessel of clay with your own brokenness, and pain, and stuff. But when you start to catch the mission, what starts happening is all of a sudden, all your stuff kind of falls to the backside, because you're here to seek the peace and the prosperity of the city. You're here to see it prosper. You will prosper as you help it prosper. The reason we start getting rid of the flesh and the sin and the worldliness of our life is because that's what keeps the light from shining. It's like you're taking off the shades. You're taking off the covers. You're taking off the things that hide the life of God that is in you, but is meant to be shown to the world around you.

And what happens, there's a lot of good verses after here. I was seeing my children again. I told them where we were going and we weren't even going to get there. They were like, "Dad, you promised we were going to talk about dreaming with God." I'm like, "I didn't even get to the telling you we weren't going to talk about dreaming with God today. We're going to talk about the next one." I didn't even get to there, but that's okay. Because here's what I think. I think the Lord is trying to help us in this season, believe. Just believe. Because if we can believe, we will start acting as if it were so. When you really believe something, you don't have to try. The reason religion is so hard for most of us is because we're trying to do something we don't actually believe.

We're trying to change our behavior, and change our language, and change our tastes, and change our desires because we don't actually believe that we now are who God says we are and that He did what He said He did. Because once we genuinely start to believe that, we start to act as if it were so, and it starts to change things around us. Then, we literally become the light of the world in the places we go. I believe that as you start to believe this in your life, you're going to be light in your marriage, you're going to be light to your children, you're going to be light to your parents, you're going to be light to your friends, to your family, to your school, to your team, because this is what a hope carrier does. Close your eyes with me. Let's just trust that God did what He wanted to do today.

My question for you is, what is the Holy Spirit just stirring up inside your own soul? What's He whispering? What's He saying? Even as we're here in this series, by faith, can you just sense that the life of God in those around you is bringing light to you? Just being in the room, just being online, just being around other people that the life of God is active and vibrant in, it's bringing light to your problems, and your situations, and your circumstances. That it's helping you figure out the way back home and the way forward into the future.

I invite you this week to take some time reflecting on your own behaviors and trace them back to what the belief is that causes you to act as if that behavior was so. Let the Holy Spirit illuminate some places where maybe your beliefs are off. The Lord wants to show you what is true, what is real, and what is good. Jesus, I thank You for our church. I thank You for this group of disciples on a journey with You. Thank You, God, that we're moving from all of our expectations and preconceived notions of what church is supposed to be to just saying, "God, Your kingdom come, Your will be done."

God, thank You that this is a group of people that are saying, "I want to believe. I want to act as if it were so. I want the gospel of the kingdom to change my life. I want Your life in my heart, that I might be light to those around us." Lord, keep strengthening us. Keep giving us courage. Keep building our faith, and keep helping us believe that which is true, that which is real, that which is good. Because You've given us an amazing city to be responsible for. May we do the little by little, building the wall of this city that's in front of our house, our job, our school; that we might see Your kingdom come and Your will be done. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.