

Sometimes you just have to keep singing it till you believe it. Jesus, would You help us surrender? Would You help us tear down the castle we've built in our heart? Would You help us give up our kingdom, and our reign, and our rulership, and our pride, and our rights, and all our defenses, fill in the moat that we've built around ourselves to keep everyone, including You, out from the real us? Jesus, we choose to surrender that Your kingdom may come and that Your will might be done in my heart and in my life in Jesus' name.

Whatever campus you're at, why don't you go ahead and grab your seat. I am so glad you are here with us today. You see, over the past 6, 7 weeks or so, we've been in this series, in this season that's called The Hope Carrier Initiative. It's been a long time coming for our church. We've been praying and preparing for this for a really long time. We kind of didn't know what was going to happen, how God was going to move. We just moved into it by faith. It's kind of interesting when you're willing to give over your plans to the Lord, how He takes them and changes them; but He always makes them better. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'Plans for a hope and a future.'" It's always good when we entrust it to the Lord.

You see, today was the day we were going to end that series. We had a whole thing planned on how we were going to end it and how we were going to commission you to be hope carriers and all those things. Here's what I would say to you, we're probably about half-way through the series. As we get ready to go into this little period of time of Spring Break, where everybody has Spring Break at different times and places and school districts and all the different things, and everybody needs a breath in their life, what we just wanted to do is just take a moment to then respond to that which God has been doing. You see, we've said a hope carrier is a disciple of Jesus who lives on mission to change their world. We've been talking a lot about this concept of being a disciple, a student, a learner, a follower, one who becomes like the one that they're following.

A disciple is not someone who just trusts in Jesus to get to heaven when they die. No. They believe that the life of Jesus is what's available to them in the here and now. They're saying, "Jesus, teach me; be my teacher. Teach me how to be a good husband. Teach me how to be a good wife. Teach me to be a mom or a dad. Teach me to be a businessperson. Teach me how to be a student. Jesus, teach me how to live in the kingdom of Heaven in the here and now, in the midst of a world that is lost, lonely, dying, and broken. Teach me, Lord." That's why Jesus says, "Come and follow Me." Not, "Hey, pray a prayer and go your own way, and when you die I'll be there waiting for you." No, no. "Follow me, in the here and now, and I'm going to give you abundant life, a new life, right now." Over these last 6 or 7 weeks, we've covered a lot of ground.

We've probably gone 15-20 minutes over every message. Really, you've had about 12-14 weeks worth of content in the last 6 or 7, and you've done a great job of being gracious and being open and saying, "I want to hear God speak and I want to be a part of what God is

doing. I'm willing to linger a little bit longer because when God is moving, I'm willing to alter my life and my plans to be a part, because I want to receive that which He offers." But, I acknowledge, fully, that we've covered a lot of ground. We just need to stop to take a breath and respond. You see, Jesus, at the end of His most famous sermon ever, The Sermon on the Mount; after He preaches what it looks like to live in the kingdom of Heaven, here is what He says when He closes it all out.

He says, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Fascinating words from Jesus at the end of the most famous, most important sermon that's ever been preached. He says, "Hey, I'm really glad that you heard all of this, but if you don't put it into practice you are choosing to be a fool." That's what He says.

He says, "I know we've said some really good things here. I know you've heard things you've never heard before." It's what He's saying to the crowd, because, literally, they have never heard anything like Jesus has said before. He says, "If you do not put this into practice, you're choosing to be a fool; but if you choose to put it into practice, and you, by faith, apply it, and your faith moves you to action and even if you don't understand it, you choose to obey it, then you choose to be wise." Wise, and when the brokenness and the storms of this life come – because they will come for both the wise man and the foolish man – you will not fall, because you're living in a superior reality. You're living from the kingdom towards this earth instead of getting lost in the cloudiness and the confusion and the chaos of this world.

We always want to be people who don't just hear, but actually obey, put it into practice, move forward by faith. If you've been a part of our church for the last couple of years, you hear me saying this more and more and more, because this is the difference between a wise person and a foolish person. They both hear the same things, the wise man just chooses to practice it. I love that Jesus chooses the word "practice." He fully acknowledges that you don't get it right away. That it's going to take you some time. That you might trip up a little bit here and there. You might not fully get it. You might have a partial piece of the revelation, a part of the theology; but if you just have the faith to say, "Jesus, I'm practicing. I'm trying." He says, "Great. My grace is sufficient for you and it will work out all things along that journey." The question is just, are you willing to put it into practice?

Nobody would trick themselves enough to think, "I can become a great musician just by listening to good music." I mean, you can listen to all the best musicians of all time, all of it's on Spotify. I'm not even going to try to name names, because I ain't losing you over that. But no one would convince themselves to think, "If I just listened to two hours of great music a day,

"I'll be a great musician." No. You'll have a great vision for what good music sounds like. You'll enjoy the good music, but unless you start practicing playing music, you will never become a great musician. None of us in this room think that we will become the next greatest NFL superstar by just watching Sunday NFL Ticket. We know that, right?

Look, if you really want to become a professional football player, you've got to go and practice. It doesn't matter how much of it you watch, how much of it you hear, you've got to practice. It doesn't matter how many times you come to church and listen to what's said, if you don't ever practice it you'll never become like Jesus. The worst part about it is you'll convince yourself into thinking that you are. It's like those fantasy football players that think they know more. In fact, James, Jesus' little brother, later says the same thing. He says, "Humbly accept the word planted in you which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." I love that. Humbly accept it. Can I ask you a question, over these last 6, 7 weeks, have you had a posture of humility with God's Word?

Have you opened up your heart, and your life, and your mind to basically just have this sense of humility, like, "God whatever You say, I want to receive it. Whatever You say Lord, I'm not going to fight it, I'm not going to argue it, I'm not going to let my tradition, my background, my experiences, my preference, my opinions come against that. I just want to humbly open up the soil of my heart, and say, plant your word, right here, Lord. I want to receive it. I don't want to just listen to it, I actually want to do what it says." I love it says you're going to deceive yourself. So much of the church at large, we live our lives so deceived because we know it, but we don't do it. We have a thousand reasons why we don't do it. That's irrelevant. The real question is, is, do I have the faith to just say, I've heard and I choose to obey.

Faith and action; hearer and doer. "Because You say so Lord, I will do it." "Because You say it is so Lord, I will believe it." "Because this is what You have declared, I will receive it." "I don't get it. I don't like it. I don't understand it, but You said it, so I will do it, even if it costs me everything. Because to not do it costs me even more." See, we spend so much of our lives thinking about what obedience costs us, never flipping the equation and thinking how much does disobedience actually cost me? That's going to cost me something to obey God? You're right, it sure will. But it'll cost you even more to not obey God, because you miss out on the life that He offers you in the here and now. In fact, one more, I love this. It says, "To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'"

Everybody in the world, basically, knows verse 32, right. "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." We just forget that it starts with "then." Anytime something starts with "then," you have to go to the "if," right. "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." No, no. "Then" you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. If there's a then, what's the if? The if is, "If you hold to my teachings." "If you obey. If you continue in My word. If you put into practice that which I have

said, then you will know the truth." Not know information, know experience. Then you will experience the truth, and that truth, that experience will set you free. If I want to be free, I've got to experience the truth.

If I want to experience the truth, I have to obey or hold to the teachings. What do I obey, what do I do? One more word, we gotta believe. To believe something is to act as if it were so. These two verses -- I'm preaching and I'm not supposed to right now. But take them and think about them later. To believe something is to act as if it were so. Jesus is saying, "If you believe, you will act as if it were so, so you will hold to My teachings." You will obey. You'll put them into practice. You will take the next step of faith, then you will experience the truth. The truth -- Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. So it's actually, I'll experience the very life of Jesus Himself and that is the very thing that sets me free from all the hang-ups and hurts and sins and brokenness and flesh and the things around me in this world. Then we know that we're really His... What does it say? Disciples.

Why? Because a disciple is a learner, a student, a follower, one who becomes like the one they're following. One who says, "You are teacher, you are Rabbi, you are Lord, and you know better than me. I don't get it and I don't know it, but I want to be free, so I've got to experience the truth. If you say it, I'll do it." I'm learning to believe to act as if it were so because I don't want to just say I believe it, I actually want to live like I do believe it. Okay. That's a lot. You're like, I thought we were responding. We are. We're about to right now. But this is what it looks like. This is what it looks like to actually be disciples, to actually live in the kingdom, to walk forward with Jesus together. If you've got your Hope Carrier Field Journal, will you take it out? Hope Carrier Field Journals, we gave these out the first few weeks of this series to anybody and everyone who wanted one.

We told you, man, bring this with you every single week because we're believing by faith that God is going to speak to you, that you're going to discover some amazing things along the way. If you didn't get one, you can get them. They're available at hopecarrier.com. You can get as many as you want to give to people or for yourself. Or if you've run out and already filled out all the pages, go ahead and get another one, if you've taken that many notes. But if you'll pull this out, and if you will turn to page 38 or 42 based on the Field Journal that you have. If you have the leader edition, it's 38. If you have the regular edition, it's page 32. Leader -- excuse me, 42. Page 42 or 38, one or the other of them. Put the slide up for the, for them, guys, so they can see. This is the page you're looking for. Leaders, remember we said at the Leader Summit, we said the success of this whole thing is going to be based on how you lead it, so my question for you is, are you leading it?

If you're a leader and you didn't bring your Field Journal with you today, I would challenge you on that. Because we talked about how important it is for you to go first and to lead the way and to engage conversations. If you don't have one, you can grab your phone or a piece of paper and a pen, because here's what we're going to do. We're just going to take a few

moments. We're going to pause. We're just going to ask the question: What's the Holy Spirit been saying to you and what's one next step He's inviting you to take? I'm going to give you a few minutes of silence. I just want you to stop, and say: What's the Holy Spirit been saying to you, and then what's one next step He's inviting you to take? We've talked about so many things. We've talked about changing your world. We've talked about the theology of work. We've talked about living under an open heaven. We've talked about the Garden City and how we're ruling and reigning with God, taking raw materials and turning them into the eternal future.

We've talked about garden theology, about how any area in life we just go back to God's design, it teaches us what's true. We talked about the kingdom and a surrendered will, and ruling and reigning and words and actions and that's how a king oversees his domain. We have a domain and how are we overseeing our domain with our words and our actions. We talked about being broken and humble before the Lord like a broken stallion that can be used by its rider, its master, to go into amazing places. We've talked about the Gospel, the good news of the kingdom that's bigger than salvation some day, and The Three Circles, discovering who we are, who God is, and what we were created to do. It'll be so many things, so here's the question: What's the Holy Spirit been saying to you? I just want you to listen for a moment.

If you're new, and you're like, "Bro today's my first time." Okay. What's God saying to you today? Because the Bible tells us that His sheep know His voice and that all who belong to Him hear His voice. That the Holy Spirit is the guide, the counselor, and the comforter of our lives. What if we just said, "Holy Spirit, would you just speak to me?" Maybe you need to look at the last few pages of notes that you've taken. Go back. Just what has He been saying to you, and then what's one next step He wants you to take? I just want to give you a few minutes of silence to just act like God is real and that God is speaking to you.

That was only 4 minutes. For some of you, that probably felt like the longest 4 minutes of your life.

It shows us how uncomfortable we are in our own soul, that we struggle sitting in silence and just letting God speak. Sometimes, one moment of silence can do more than a hundred hours of speaking. Sometimes, the reason we don't hear God speak is not because He's not speaking, it's because our lives are so loud that we can't hear the whisper of His spirit. Here's what I know. That God is good and He's good to you and He's speaking if you have the heart to listen.

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you, to your life, to your reality, and then what's the next step that He's inviting you to take? That's where He's trying to disciple you. That place, whatever you wrote down, whatever you're sensing, whatever you're feeling, that's the place that Jesus is saying, "That's where I want to be your teacher. That's where I want you to come and follow Me." Maybe your next step is something huge and big, like giving your business to God.

Maybe it's something small, like just saying, "I'm just going to do the reading plan and read through the New Testament by faith even though I don't want to." Maybe you're saying, "I don't understand it. I don't get it." That's okay, but here's what I need you to understand. What we're doing right now, this is what hope carriers do.

Part of what I'm trying to do in this series is not just teach you, but also model things to you. This is what hope carriers do. Here's what hope carriers don't do. They don't consume, consume, consume, consume, consume and never respond. Hope carriers are disciples, so they hear and they obey. They listen, and they respond. They get taught, and then they try it out. Try it out. Think of the disciples. They watched Jesus heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the kingdom, cast out demons and then not too long into the game, He says, "Now, you go and do it." He says, "I've taught you, now go try it." We've talked about it. This is Luke 9 and 10, it's a disaster.

Jesus loves them, and one chapter later says, "Let's try it again." That time, it clicked and they come back rejoicing, "Even the demons submitted to us in your name." Jesus is like, "I know, that's what I've been telling you." But we've got to try it. We've got to practice. Here's what I know the Holy Spirit is not saying. He's not shaming you. He's not condemning you. If you feel bad or guilty right now, you're listening to the voice of the world, not the voice of Heaven. Because the voice of Heaven, even if you're off track, is drawing you back by the grace of God, and saying, "There's a better way. There's new life. I know you've tried to beat this 50 times, but the 51st time, with My grace and My Spirit that's going to be the time we're going to break through." This isn't a "open up my journal and make me feel bad." In fact, I feel bad for not bringing my journal. That you might feel bad about, but maybe, you probably should on that one.

But anything other than that, anything other than that is not the Lord. He's speaking and breathing life into your soul, saying, "Come with Me." This is the thing. Remember, first week, I told you, this is the difference between good American church and kingdom come. Good American church doesn't do what we're doing right now, because it's too risky, it's not comfortable, it's not convenient for anybody. It's like, "No, no, this is supposed to be comfortable." Some of you are sitting in your little spot, and you're like, "This is not comfortable, this is not convenient, nor entertaining." I know, but there's no life transformation in that either.

There are a lot of places where that's available. We're just trying to say -- we just really want to say, "Jesus, I want Your kingdom to come and so I don't know, I'll take all the boundaries and the barriers off. Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, and it's God-breathed and it's useful for teaching and correcting and rebuking and training me in righteousness so that I may be thoroughly equipped for every good work You have for me." I just say, "Lord, I open myself up to that which You want to do, fully acknowledging that nobody really knows how to do it and it's uncomfortable and it's inconvenient and I won't feel

entertained. In fact, now I'm un-conf..." Your-- your kingdom come is, "I am now confronted with something," that's why we don't like it. This is, "I can leave here, high-five somebody in the atrium, and say, 'It was good church today,' and go about my life." You're right, you can. I'm sorry. You have now just been confronted with something that God's speaking to you and inviting you to respond to by faith. You now have a will and through your words and your actions, you get to decide what you do in your domain. Are you going to now submit it and surrender it to His words and His actions, His kingdom, or are you going to say, "No, I'm going to do it my way?"

That's what we don't like about this space. But this is the only space that brings us into the image and likeness of Jesus and allows us to see His kingdom come and allows us to live in the freedom of all the promises that Jesus declares are available and so few of us ever live. We wonder, where is this life that Jesus promises us? It's not here. It's not here. It's, "Come follow Me, lose your life and you'll find it." That's the great invitation of Jesus. This is the journey that we're on, which is why this is so inspiring. What a time to be alive. What a time to be a part of Valley Creek. What a time to be a follower of Jesus.

What a time to say, "Lord, I want to live under an open heaven and see Your kingdom come and Your will be done in the here and the now. I don't get it but I choose to follow by faith." One last verse for you, Mark Chapter 4, Jesus says, "Consider carefully what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what He has will be taken from him." Jesus says, "Hey, if you're willing to respond to the revelation that I've entrusted to you, I will give you even more." Consider carefully. What is "consider carefully"? If you're really going to consider something carefully, it really literally means to steward it. Think about it. Go back through it. Re-look at your notes. Go watch the messages again. Memorize something. Engage the reading plan. Confess and repent to someone else. Acknowledge the struggle in your own life. That's what it means. It's like, "Lord, I don't want to miss what's about to come.

I want to consider carefully what You have given me, so You can entrust me with what you want to give to me." Obeying what's in front of us is how we get access to that which is beyond us. God has some great things. Here's where we're going to keep talking about in this series. We're going to talk about dreaming with God. We're going to talk about living empowered by the Holy Spirit. We're going to talk about, what does it look like to have a powerful prayer life, to bring forth God's kingdom. What does it look like to have kingdom characteristics flowing through you in the areas of life that you go. There's so much more that's probably a lot of the "change your world" that we thought we were going to be, but God wanted us to stop on disciples. To get there, you have to say like, "Okay, Lord." This is my whole point. You don't have to get everything we've talked about for the last 7 weeks. I don't even get it all, but I would so challenge you and so encourage you, and I will be praying for you that you will take that one thing that you wrote down today and just take that one step because one baby step is to act as if it were so.

It means I believe that something He says is greater than what I am doing, so I will act as if it were so. Not a leap. God's not asking you to take a flying leap. Just one. Just one between now and the other side of Spring Break and watch what God will do. That's it for today. That actually was like a full sermon time. It wasn't supposed to be. But see, there's a lot to say as God's moving. Here's the deal. You're getting out a little early. My encouragement for you is don't rush off because this is church. Sit in your seat, listen to God, come down and get prayer, stay in the atrium and meet somebody. If you say, "I'm an introvert, I don't know how to meet anybody." Come down to the front or go to the guest tower. Me too, man. I would hate standing in the atrium.

I would be like, "Oh my gosh." I've already thought about it. Here's how I would do it. I would go find someone that serves here, that looks like they know what they're doing, and just go introduce myself and think of the one question I want to ask. Then, I feel, like, okay, at least I've got in the water. All my introverted friends, I'm with you. But meet somebody because you need a life-giving community to follow Jesus with to be a hope carrier, because the pull of the world will pull you this way, but other disciples of Jesus will say, "No, no, no, no; come on, we're going this way. We're going this way. Let's go together." Jesus, thank You so much for what You're doing in, among us, around us, and through us. Lord, we choose to submit and surrender our lives to You. Thank You, God, for this season that we're in as a people of God. Not individuals of God, people of God, a community of faith.

What a time it really is to be alive that You determine that we would be alive here and now, of all the places and all the times of history You picked and created and crafted us, because You have something for us and You put us in this family, because You have relationships and life and healing and restoration and transformation for us. Lord, we just ask, Lord I ask that Your spirit would comfort, that Your spirit would counsel, and that Your spirit would empower us to take one next step forward on our journey with You. Jesus, we want to be disciples who live on mission and change their world with You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.