

Hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. I am so glad you are here with us today. What a crazy week it has been. I don't think any of us saw it coming, this crazy snowstorm that's caused everyone to be locked up for a week. I'm so glad to be here and I'm so glad that you're here with us. We are in week three of The Hope Carrier Initiative. We are in this series, in this season where we're talking about, what does it look like to live on mission with God? How do we change our world? How do we live in the midst of the kingdom of God, in the midst of our daily lives?

I told you right from the beginning of this series that this series is designed not to answer your questions, but to create questions, to disrupt the status quo, to speak to the deep purposes of your heart and call them to the surface. Before this series ever began, I was spending some time with God praying and processing and just thinking what do you need to really become a hope carrier? I wrote these couple of things down on my board. I think you need a vision, you need a foundation, you need to practice, and then, you need a life-giving community. If you're going to become a hope carrier, you have to have a vision for what can be in the midst of what is. You need a foundation, a theological framework of truth to build your life upon. You need to practice, because none of us know how to fully do it. Then, you need a life-giving community of people who are moving forward with you. Last week, if you are here with us, really, the whole message was a foundation of theology, a foundation of truth of what the mission of God looks like.

If a hope carrier is a disciple of Jesus who lives on mission to change their world, then we have to understand what the mission is if we're ever going to be able to be a hope carrier. Unfortunately, because of the craziness of this week, I think, in a lot of ways, that seed that was sown got blown away in the wind. Normally, we get to have the Word of God spoken to our lives and then that week we can reflect on it, and process it, and pray through it, and our Circles meet to discover it, so that seed can take root and begin to grow. But none of our Circles were able to meet this week because of the weather. The craziness that I'm sure blew into your life caused you to not be able to reflect and think. I know last week's message was so full, it was so hard to even absorb it all. In fact, a lot of times, my wife Colleen will tell me, she says, "You're so excited about this stuff. You think about it all week. Most people show up, and they've got so much going on in their lives. It's hard for them to receive everything you want to say in a 30-minute window."

I don't want us to rush forward and miss this truth. What I want us to do is, I just want us to walk back through it again. You see, what I love is that we're not in a hurry to get anywhere, and that we're a church that's not interested in consuming or being entertained, but we want to meet with God and hear from God and then do what God says. I want us to walk through last week's message again, but I'm going to interact with it with you to just draw your attention to some things that I think are really important in the midst of it. You see, this whole series is really about two things - repentance and faith. Repentance - going back and getting God's mind, God's perspective on truth. If we will change the way we think, it will change the way we live. Then,

faith - having the confidence to believe that what God says is true and then therefore moving forward in obedience.

Let's walk through this again because if we're going to live on mission, we have to understand what the mission is. Will you grab your Hope Carrier Journal, will you grab a pen, will you open up your mind, will you open up your heart, and will you let God speak to you? Holy Spirit, we invite You in. We open up our eyes. We open up our ears. Will You open up our hearts to hear from You? Where does all this come from? Where does all this come from, and why don't we think about it like this? Because I would be honest that most of you -- if you were honest, most of you here today, like, this is not how you view the world and this is not how you view your life and this is not how you view the mission that you're on. Why? Because we've got to go all the way back to the beginning and that's what we forget. So, you go all the way back to the beginning of creation.

In the beginning, God created everything - sun, the moon, the stars, the plants, the animals, the earth, and you and I. He made Adam and Eve, and He said, "Let us make man in our image and in our likeness and let them rule over all the earth." He gave us an identity. He gave us relationship. And then He gave us a purpose and said, "I've made you to rule and reign with me." Humanity was God's delegated authority on this earth, commissioned by God to rule and reign with God as His ambassadors, as His representative on this earth. Not just over some of the earth, but all of the earth. It was like He made us in His image and His likeness and then He put us here and then He said, "Through this deep relationship that you and I are going to have," as God walked with Adam in the, in the Garden, in the cool of the day, "from that place, from abiding in Me, you are going to rule and reign over this world." Think of the creativity. Think of the dream and the vision and the possibilities and what could be. They were going to design and build and create and release the glory of God.

They were the first hope carriers, is what I'm trying to tell you. Hope carriers, where did it come from? "Valley Creek Church, last week." No. Genesis 1:26, in the very beginning of time, "And God blessed them," the first thing God does is He blesses you and He blesses you with purpose. The first thing He says to humanity, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it using all its vast resources in the service of God and man and have dominion over the earth." Be fruitful - live a life of productive beauty bringing things to the fullness of their potential. Multiply - reproduce the life of God in you into the world around you. Fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the goodness of God. Subdue it - bring order to chaos, wisdom to foolishness, hope to despair. Use your resources to accomplish God's purposes in the lives of men and have dominion over the earth. Dominion.

See, when we think of dominion or ruling over, we think about lording over, dominating, pressing down, because that's the world's definition. But in the Bible, dominion and ruling over always means to come under and lift up. It means to bless. It means to care for. It means to serve. It means to lay down your life that it may flourish. This word right here is really important

- subdue it. Here's what you have to think. This is the perfection of the Garden. There's no sin yet. Adam and Eve haven't fallen, so what on earth would need to be subdued? This is really important theology, and you've got to get what I'm talking about today to catch the rest of hope carriers. You see, Satan is a created being. He wanted to be worshiped and so he wanted his own kingdom. So, he rebelled, and with pride and arrogance resisted God. So God took him and He put him on the earth. You have to remember that Satan is not God's rival and he is not God's equal.

He is a created being made by God. He is inferior to God in every way. God could destroy Him with a single word. But He decided to put him on this earth and make man in His image and His likeness. In His wisdom, He decided that we, through obedience and worship of God, would be the ones to fully defeat Satan once and for all. Subdue it - we were in the Garden. It's all we could manage. But as we are fruitful and multiply, we'd take the Garden of Eden, which is a picture of the very kingdom of God, and we would multiply and we would reproduce and we would eventually fill the earth fully with the kingdom of God, that there would be no place left for Satan to be. If we could subdue him, it means we had the power and the authority and therefore he had none. You see, I think Genesis 1:28 is one of the most important verses in the Bible, because it tells you your "why." It doesn't matter what you're doing or where you're doing it, this is your "why." This is your created purpose.

This is why you are here. The only question is, is do you believe it? Do you wake up in the morning and think to yourself, "I've been blessed by God." I'm here to be fruitful, to work with God, bringing things to the fullness of their potential, and dreaming with God and curating and cultivating the garden that I've been placed in to bear fruit for others. You have to ask yourself, what are you multiplying or reproducing? Are you reproducing faith, hope, and love or fear, doubt, and hate? What are you filling your space with? Are you filling it with the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and gentleness? Are you filling it with the works of the flesh, gossip, slander, grumbling, complaining, and disillusionment? Are you subduing things, or are you the one that needs to be subdued? Then, how do you view your resources - your time, your money, and your energy?

Do you see those as part of the very mission of God or things to be hoarded for yourself? You see, I think sometimes we give Satan way too much credit, and we forget that he is only empowered through human agreement. In the garden, Adam and Eve had the authority, they had the power delegated to them by God. Satan had none. He was only empowered through human agreement. He couldn't come in and take things by force. He had to try to deceive Eve, and that's what he did. "Did God really say...?" Because she didn't know what God said, she came into agreement or alignment with Satan, and gave him a power and authority over her life and ours. This is why, when Satan tries to tempt Jesus, Jesus says, "It is written," as His response. In other words, "This is what the Word of God says." So He had a victory. But you can't say, "It is written," if you don't know what it says.

This is why it's so important to engage the Scriptures and be a part of our reading through the New Testament this year. Because you have to know what God's truth is. Because Satan is only empowered through human agreement. When you believe a lie, you empower the liar. In fact, do you remember when Jesus is about to go to the cross, and Peter tries to stop Him? Jesus says to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of man." Whoa, where does that come from? What He's saying there is, when we think worldly thoughts, we're in agreement with the kingdom of darkness, and when we agree with darkness, we empower darkness to rule and reign over our lives. In fact, any place in your life where you have no hope, that's a place where you're believing a lie. Because Jesus is living hope and He's defeated sin, death, and the grave, so everything has hope.

If you believe it's hopeless, you're agreeing with darkness and you're empowering him to rule and reign over your life. In fact, isn't it interesting that God doesn't give Adam and Eve any instructions on spiritual warfare? Do you ever think about that? He doesn't give them instructions on spiritual warfare, why? Because they had power and authority over darkness. All they had to do was what? Obey God, enjoy God, and walk with God. It's what Jesus did - obeyed the Father, walked with the Father, and enjoyed the Father. That's what we can do, too. We have the power and authority in Jesus' name. So what did God do? "The Lord God took the man and He put him in the Garden of Eden," everybody say this with me, "to work it and take care of it." So He makes us in His image in His likeness. He puts us in the Garden. He tells us that we're to rule over it, and He tells us to get to work.

Now, some of you are going to hate this already. This means that work is very good. God put us in the Garden to work it before the fall. So work is very good, because everything God made in the beginning was very good. So a lot of us, we have this love-hate relationship with work. We think work is a curse. We love the identity and the significance and the prosperity it can give us. But boy, we want to retire as fast as we can. We don't want to get up on Monday and go to work. We want as much as we can for as little as we can. We think that the work is a burden, it's a bondage, it's an oppression on our life, but that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says it was very good and you were created and designed to do it. You were made in the image and likeness of God, the God who worked, created all things, and on the seventh day rested from his work.

Jesus says, "The father is always working up until this very time, and I too am working." So work is in the very fabric and fiber of who we are created to be. Work is no more cursed than children are. If you know the story, that connects. What happens when Adam and Eve sinned? What happens? Not that work was cursed and not that children were cursed, but the child-bearing was going to become painful and the ground was cursed. It would grow thorns and thistles and we would, through the sweat of our brow, fight it all the days of our lives. Children aren't cursed and work isn't cursed. It just became harder. Isn't it interesting, be fruitful and multiply - children; fill the earth and subdue it - work; are the two major consequences. The very purpose for which we were created for had the greatest resistance against it. So a lot of us

spend our lives viewing work through the curse and we forget that Jesus came and He broke the curse.

We forget that when He went to the cross, He sweat drops of blood and they put a crown of thorns on His head. When they put the thorns on His head and His blood mingled with the sweat of His brow as a man, He broke the curse, redeemed it once and for all, and gave us back our work. We, now, work from rest. We work from grace. We don't work to become, we work because we are. We do it with God in the sense of freedom and purpose and prosperity. Some of you, as we start talking about work and being a hope carrier, you're probably sitting there and you're thinking, "Yeah, but, like, I hate my work and my work is like, so meaningless. It's so pointless." Can I just tell you, there is no such thing as pointless work.

Any work that is done with all of our heart to bless others, is good work - whether it's changing diapers, sweeping the floor, packing that thing up, fixing that thing, doing that thing that no one else sees in the back room, that no one else seems to care about; if it's done for the good of others and the glory of God with all your heart, it is good work. It's why it says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." Work at it with all your heart. That's good work. It's good work and the Lord will reward you for it. Even if what you do in secret, no one else sees it, you should say, "Sweet." Because God says what's done in secret, He will reward later in the open. This is good work. A lot of us walk around and we say things like this, "Oh, I'm just a..." "I just do this..." "I'm just a stay-at-home parent." Really, you're just raising up the next generation of hope carriers?

"I'm just a teacher." Really? You're just speaking identity into the very students that God has given to you every day? "I'm just a student." Really? You're growing in the very character and nature and wisdom and favor with God and men, and you are around hundreds of lost, lonely, and broken students every single day. "I'm just a nurse." Really? You're just bringing God's mercy and His healing and His dignity into people's lives? "I'm just a barista." You're just serving people coffee so they can go and pursue their destiny and their God-given purpose? "I'm just a manager." Really? You're just overseeing a group of people and helping them achieve their God-given destiny and purpose? "I'm just an ambulance driver." Really? You're just bringing God's healing and help in an expedient way into their life? "I'm just a musician." Really? You're just releasing the very sounds of heaven into the earth around you?

"I'm just a coach." Really? You're just teaching people how to endure and persevere in life? Or "I'm just an athlete." Really? You're just teaching your peers, who have no idea what character and sportsmanship and "with all your heart" looks like? You're "just a technology person." Really? You're just bringing God's creative solutions into people's lives? "I just serve at the church." Seriously? You're just mending and repairing the tears in people's souls? There's no "just." There's no "just." It all depends on how you look at work. So, my question for you is,

where do you go? What area of life do you work in? Then, here's my question for you, how do you view that work? How do you view your work?

Because it's really hard to bring hope to something you hate. I don't think you heard that. It's really hard to bring hope to something you hate. If all I do is complain about how much I hate my work, how in the world am I going to bring hope to it? The question you have to ask yourself is, do you rule over your work or does your work rule over you? If I'm always stressed and always overwhelmed and always angry, then my work is ruling over me. I was never made to work separate from God, and I was never made to work for myself. I was made to work with God in the place, the garden, that He put me in, and tending it and bringing it to its fullness of potential. That's how I rule over my work. If I do it for myself or without God, it is going to rule over me and it will dominate me. Your work is not just your job.

A lot of us think our work is our job. Your job is a part of your work, but your work is whatever garden God has put you in. Whatever garden God has put you in, which for all of us is at least this one and this one, and maybe a bunch of other ones. You're now supposed to use your life work, your energy, your resources, your gifting, your talents, your abilities to bring those things to the fullness of potential. This is why you can retire from a job, you will never be able to retire from your work. Why? Because a job is a temporary assignment, your work is a permanent, eternal kingdom calling. When do you get to retire from being fruitful and multiply, filling the earth, and subduing it? Tell me. Tell me. 65? "Oh, I hope the government brings it to 63." "If I'm 20-something, I already think I've done it."

Trying to get you in the game, here, with me today, people. We spend our whole lives trying to retire from the purpose of God in our life. Maybe we think about this wrong. Maybe we need to change how we look at it. You're created to work with God. This is why you can't get away from it. This is why people, at the end of their life, this is why old men meticulously manicure their lawns. Do you ever wonder why? Because it's the very purpose in their soul. This is why old women meticulously manage their interior house and there's like, plastic covers on the couch, so you don't mess it up. This is why children wake up in the morning and no one has to tell them to get to work and their work is play, making things to share with their mom or their dad. No one has to tell a kid to do that, why? Because it's in their soul.

This is why no one has to tell you to control the people around you. Because you were created to subdue, and if you're not subduing darkness, you will make everyone around you darkness and you will subdue them and you will control them. No one has to tell us this, it's so deeply ingrained in us. It's just what are we doing with it? How do we walk it out, if you will? Here's the problem. The problem is, we've bought into the world's definition, and we think that freedom is owning your own time. Can I tell you, the most miserable people in life are the people who own their own time. Because they have no purpose. Boredom is the root of sin, and selfishness is the highway to hopelessness. Because you're not the king and there's no hope in you. So, if you put yourself in the center, you've just officially said, "I have a hopeless life."

Maybe this is why there's so much addiction and anxiety and mental health disorders and sexual dysfunction, because we have decided that we don't want to work. We want to get away from our purpose, and so we're looking for something to satisfy our soul, because your soul was created to work with God. "Be fruitful and multiply and subdue it." Listen to me, people, you want to jump around from spot to spot - it takes time to subdue something. You have to be there for a while. Some of you are like, "I hate my job, I want to get out of it." Maybe God's got you there because He needs to subdue something in you. We've got to stop looking at work through the curse and start looking at work through creation. Are you with me on this? You don't get to retire from your purpose, you retire from a job. You know who some of the most fruitful people I know are? Grandmas. Grandmas. Grandmas.

Do you know that I think the American church runs on the prayers of grandmas. Because most grandmas realize, "Man, I don't like the direction my children and my grandchildren are going, and so if nobody gets in this thing and subdues it, we're going to be in trouble. So, I've been created to subdue some things and so I'm going to step in, through my intercession and take authority." That's work. Work is not Grandma going back to work at wherever she retired from, her job, or whatever that thing is. Do you catch what I'm saying? It's not a job. It's a calling. It's a lifestyle. In whatever space you go and you've got to wake up to it, man. See, you have been placed in a garden by God. Whether you chose that garden or like that garden or not, He's put you there to work it, and so we need to wake up to that reality and have some passion, and some energy, and take the responsibility, and the ownership that God has given to us.

I mean think about it, if you were satan and you realized you didn't have any power and authority, you only could get it through human agreement, what would you do? You would try to trick us into passivity, into apathy, into ambivalence, into "why bother" and "who cares," because if we give up on our assignment, then satan has free reign to rule and reign. You have been commissioned by God, and it doesn't matter what you do, it matters how you do it. See, we over-worry about what we're doing. What job should I take? What am I called to do? What is my purpose in life? What should I do? "What" doesn't matter, how you do what you do matters. How you do the work that you do is what matters. Do you do it with all your heart and unto the Lord for the good of others and the glory of God?

It doesn't matter "what," it matters "how." In fact, this is why Jesus says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." In other words, He says the way that you work should be so radically different from everyone else around you that people see the goodness and the glory of God flowing through your life just by the way you do what you do - with excellence and servanthood, and creativity and humility. It doesn't matter what you do, it matters how you do it. There's no such thing as trivial or finite or purposeless work. This is why Jesus even highlights the widow who puts in her small offering in the midst of all these rich people putting in their big offering, and He says, "She gave more

than everyone else." In other words, to highlight that the little she did was with all her heart and it means everything to the Lord.

This is why Jesus, when the woman washes his feet, and people shame and condemn that meaningless work that she's doing, He stops them all and says, "What she has just done will be told for all of eternity," in a room full of a bunch of men who thought they were better than washing the feet of Jesus. There's no such thing as meaningless and trivial work when it's done for the good of others and the glory of God. It's not what you do, it's Who you do it with. In fact, you have to ask yourself the question, how does Jesus wash the feet of His disciples? How does David tend sheep? How does Joseph serve in prison? How does Daniel serve evil kings? You know how, because they knew God was with them. Jesus did it with the Father. The Lord was with Joseph. He was with Daniel. He was with David, and He is with you.

See, the problem for a lot of us is I think the reason we hate our work is because we don't do it with God. We've left God out of our work and then we wonder why it feels meaningless, and purposeless, and insignificant. In fact, the question I want to ask you is this, how aware of are you of God in the midst of your daily work? Maybe the problem is we've left Him out of our work and that's why it doesn't seem to work. You were never meant to work by yourself or for yourself. You're meant to do it with God. I mean I remember, one day, a few years ago, I was taking my daughter to work with me. She's probably 8 or 9, and she was so excited to go to work with me. She went to bed early. She got up early. She got dressed in her best clothes. She got her backpack on, and when we were in the truck driving to work, all she kept saying is, "I'm going to work with daddy. I'm going to work with daddy. Oh, it's going to be... I'm going to work with my daddy."

The Lord showed me something in that. He said, "This is how you should go to work with Me every single day." I'm going to work with my Father, not for myself or by myself, but with Him. You see, I think there's three types of people. There's people who worship themselves, there's people who worship work, and there's people who see their work as worship. There's people who worship themselves and they think they're the king and they're in the center and everybody else should work for them and they want to do the least amount possible for the most amount possible. Then, there's people that worship their work and through striving and performance and stress and fear and anxiety, everything is about their work and their performance. Then, there's people who see their daily work as worship, as unto the Lord and with God.

If you're part of the next generation, can I encourage you, don't buy into the lie of the enemy that you don't need to work. You were created to work with God. I know it's in reaction to the generation before you that worshiped their work and was stressed and burned out all the time. We're supposed to see our work as worship, because God has given you a garden to tend. We need to arise to it and take the responsibility, and the opportunity, and the privilege that He has given us. We create our theology based on a religion, our personal experience, and what



the world says. It's the worst way to make your theology. Your theology should be what happened in the Garden before the fall, because that's when you discover God's intended purpose and design. In fact, Jesus, when they come to Jesus and they try to figure out, is it okay to get divorced and what's the theology of marriage, listen -- look at it.

"Haven't you read," He replied, "That at the beginning the Creator made the male and female, and said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, the two will become one flesh?... Moses permitted" religion said, "you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." In other words Jesus says, you want to know theology on anything, go back to the beginning, look at what the Creator did. If you want to know theology of women, of sexuality, of marriage, of humanity, of the earth, of God, of work, of what you are created for, don't determine it by religion and opinions and what other people say and Twitter; like that's like -- Twitter is the worst theology there is, go back to Genesis 1, 2, and 3. What is God's design? That's called Garden Theology, and that's what Jesus teaches us to do. Garden theology - it is so important for us to grasp in our hearts. I really believe that so much of the theology, what we believe about God, what we believe about truth, comes from the wrong sources.

It comes from the world, what we've experienced or what we feel, or what people that we love and have compassion on believe is true. But just because that's what we've seen and experienced doesn't make it true. We've got to go back to the beginning. That's what Jesus shows us. Go back to how the Creator created, how the Designer designed, and that's truth. Let me get real specific for you and try to connect some dots for you. Like homosexuality, you have to ask yourself the question, where does your theology of that topic come from? See, if we go back to the Garden, we see God made a man and a woman. He said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife," and marriage was designed to be between a man and a woman.

How about transgenderism? When we go back to the Garden, we see God made man and woman in His image and His likeness. There was no fluidity. There was no transition. God didn't make a mistake. They were fearfully and wonderfully made. How about abortion? You go back to the Garden. You see life was precious. Life was sacred. It had a sanctity and a holiness to it, to be guarded and protected at all costs. How about women? You go back to the Garden. Women weren't second-class citizens and oppressed; they were empowered to rule and reign with God. How about racism and slavery and hatred? You go back to the Garden and God made everyone in His image and His likeness and they were fearfully and wonderfully made and empowered by Him. How about work? You go back to the Garden, it was not a curse and something to get out of. It was something blessed and a purpose of our life.

How about man, humanity? You go back and you see man was made to live in the very presence of God, so when we separate from it, that's when we wither and die. How about God Himself? We make so much of our theological conclusions on God based on world events and

out-of-context passages of the Old Testament. Instead of just going back to the Garden and seeing that He was good, and kind, and loving, and faithful; you have to go back to the Garden. You see, if you had a piece of technology, an appliance or a tool and it wasn't working, what would you do? You would go back to the instructions and you would read how the creator created it, how the designer designed it, how the maker made it to function, and then it would start working again. We have to go back to the Garden and let God tell us what's true.

If you're a student or a young adult, can I tell you, if you can grab Garden theology, it will save you a lifetime of being tossed to and fro by the waves of thoughts of this world, the deception that wants to deceive you, from emotions, and feelings, and experiences. Because you will know how the Creator created, how the Designer designed, and so you will know truth. We all have to ask ourselves this question, who defines my theology? Because whoever defines your theology is who you follow and whoever you follow is your god. Don't let your theology be created by the world, feelings, opinions or emotions. Let it be created by God, the Creator and the Designer, the way He made it in the Garden. The problem in the Garden is, is that Adam and Eve did the same thing we do.

They tried to get in the world what they already had in God. They tried to get through performance what they have freely received by grace. In that moment when they took the Tree of the Knowledge of the Good and Evil and they ate of it, Satan deceived them, that's all he could do; he had no power or authority, all he could do was chirp and deceive them and he got them to dream about something that they weren't supposed to be dreaming about, and then we fell. When we fell and we did that, we rebelled against God. You are slaves to whomever you obey. So, we were no longer under God, we now became a slave to Satan and we gave him the authority of all the areas of life that had been trusted to us. This is why when Jesus is tempted by Satan - "The devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms," the areas of life, "of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'" You can't give what you haven't received. This proves to us that we lost the authority to rule and reign, we gave it to Satan. This is why he can say to Jesus, "I'll give it to you, because it's mine. It's been given to me by Adam and Eve."

When we sinned and when we fell, what was a blessing became a curse and instead of being fruitful we became barren, disconnected from God, living a life of busyness and activity, and leafiness to cover up the hollowness of our own lives. Instead of multiplying we started dividing from God and from each other. The spirit of offense was released into this world. Instead of filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the goodness of God, we started to fill our lives with the lust of the eyes and the cravings of the flesh and the pride of life. Instead of subduing things, we became the agents of chaos, bringing chaos everywhere we went. Then, we started using God and man to get a bunch of resources for our own lives. Instead of having dominion, the world dominated us and pressed us down. We went from royalty to rebels, from sons to slaves, from working with God to being enemies of God, and yet God never gave up.

You see, what we lost in the Garden, Jesus restored to us. "For If, by the trespass of the one man," Adam, "death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of Grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." This is what we had in Adam. When Adam sinned, we lost it all. But now, what we have in Jesus is more than we ever lost in Adam. This is what we had in Adam. We reigned with God. We lost it all, death reigned over us. Satan reigned over the Earth. But now, in Jesus, we have that much more. How much more? We have more in Jesus than we lost than Adam. Think about it. Think about it. In the Garden, we walked with God in the cool of the day. Now, God lives in us. In the Garden, we were created in the image and likeness of God.

Now, we're actually included in Christ and everything that's true of Him is now true of us. In the Garden, we were created by God. But now, in Jesus, we've been redeemed by God. In the Garden, God breathed His breath into us. At the resurrection, Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into us. It's like, Jesus, when He says, "All authority on heaven and earth," the resurrected Jesus, "has been given unto Me, therefore, go make disciples." He's like, "Guys, I got it all back. Genesis 1:28 starts again. Let's go do some good work." The gospel has come and it has changed your life and you can be restored back to the purpose. See, salvation is not about getting to heaven one day. It's about living under an open heaven today, and saying that the kingdom is here and it's flowing through me and I don't have to live finite, pointless, inferior, purposeless work. In fact, I'm God's work. I'm God's work. "We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works." It's like, we don't work to become, we work because we are, and I've got to start looking at work again through creation and redemption, not through the fall.

I don't have to spend my life with thorns and thistles. It doesn't have to rule over me. I can rule with Him over this world because that's what I've been created and called to do. I don't work to become, I work because I am. I don't work for myself or by myself. I work deeply connected with God, releasing His kingdom into the world around me. In the beginning, God created the Garden and He put us in it. It was a picture of the kingdom of God and we were supposed to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. But then, we lost everything. Jesus came and He restored all things. Some day, in the very end, what started in Genesis 1, in Revelation 21, the very end, says, "Then, I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the fullness of the kingdom of God," the Garden City, if you will.

"The New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God... and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now, the dwelling of God is with men and He will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God...' And they will reign forever and ever." What started in a Garden eventually becomes a city and it was always supposed to be that way. We were in the Garden as curators, cultivators, builders, designers. People who are supposed to create kingdom culture and ultimately multiply that thing until the only thing that was left on this earth was the kingdom of God, but we lost it. But Jesus restored

it. In the end, it's going to be a Holy City, a Garden City, if you will. From a Garden, raw materials, to a city, the fullness of the kingdom of God. We are the ones who are working with Him to bring this to pass. Does this not sound eerily familiar to Genesis 1 and 2; God is with them walking in the Garden in the cool of day. They will reign, there's a purpose and a destiny and a plan over their life?

See, your work does these four things, and this is why I just didn't want to skip this. This is real fast, your work does these four things. One is just, your work is worship. When you work, it's worship. When you do it with all your heart as unto the Lord, no matter how trivial, no matter how small it is, it's worship. Even if it's just for this life, it is a sacrifice and an offering; a gift to God. It takes faith to do good work and faith pleases God. In fact, the word "work" actually means "worship" in the original language, so, your work is worship. Second thing is, your work will be rewarded. The Bible is so clear that one day, when we stand before the Lord, we will be rewarded for how we lived in this age. That's why Jesus says, "If you're faithful with a few things, I will entrust you with greater or many things." This is why He tells the Parable of the Talents and He gives guys some small stuff. He says, "Go and use this."

He comes back, and He says, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Come share in your master's happiness. You've been faithful with a few things, I will entrust you with greater things." One guy was giving a sum of money and He got to then rule over 10 cities. That was a reward and there will be a reward. In fact, the Bible tells us, your work, when it's brought before the Lord, will either be straw, hay, and stubble, or it will be gold, silver, and precious stones. You will be rewarded for your work, especially the work done in secret that no one else seems to care about. Third thing is, somehow your work participates in the creation of the Garden City. We are the people of the future in the present. We're already in the kingdom. It's the future, but we're in the present. Jesus says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In other words, grab a hold of the kingdom and bring it into this world.

Pray that Your kingdom would come, Your will would be done. It's almost like the work we do somehow reaches into the future and grabs a hold of the Holy City and brings it into the garden that we're currently stewarding. Somehow, some way, God will use the work that you're doing, that's for the good of others and the glory of God, in the creation or the releasing, or the building of the final Garden City. This is when Jesus says, "You will bear fruit and fruit that will last." In fact, do you know in Revelation 21 it goes on to say that the city, the whole, the Garden City, the streets are made of gold and the foundation of its walls are decorated with precious stones. What does Paul say that when we stand before the Lord, our works will either be wood, straw, hay, and stubble, or it will be gold, silver, and precious stones. It's almost like the work we do here becomes the very building materials that God uses to build the Garden City, the fullness of the kingdom that we will be with forever.

Then, the fourth thing is your work, now, is practice for eternity. Why? Because we will reign with Him forever and ever. A lot of us think we only reign until we die. God created you to

reign, He redeemed your reigning, and you will reign with Him in eternity forever. What you do now is practice for what God has created and called you to do with Him forever. It totally changes work, if you can see that. God has placed you in a garden and He's invited you to work with Him. The question for you is, what garden has He put you in? It's probably multiple gardens that He's empowered you to rule and reign with Him. If you can catch it, what I'm trying to tell you is, it goes from a garden to a city, why? Because a garden is a place full of raw materials.

It's full of trees and minerals, and stones, and water, and plants and animals. Raw materials that God gave to Adam and Eve, to man, to dream with God, and through creativity and ingenuity and design and building and effort and passion, they could take these raw materials and turn it into a Garden City for the good of others and the glory of God. What garden has He put you in? It's full of raw materials. Maybe He's given you a house, a garden, and He's inviting you to turn it into a home, a place full of righteousness, peace, and joy. Maybe He's given you the raw materials of a group of people, and He's inviting you to turn it into a team that can do something that none of them could ever do on their own. Maybe He's given you the raw materials of a business, not just to make money, but to serve people for the good of others and the glory of God.

Maybe He's given you an idea or knowledge or education that's not meant to stay here, but that's meant to manifest and become a reality and take that raw material and turn it into the purpose of God. Maybe He's given you influence over some things, someone, some space, and He's inviting you to turn that raw material into kingdom culture. Maybe He's given you resources, finances, possessions, things, and He's inviting you to take that raw material and use it for the good of others and the glory of God. You've been placed in a garden and the mission of God is part of the fullness of your life. You don't get to segment your life, and say, "This is the mission, this is not." It's all the mission of God. If we don't understand the mission, we will never be able to be a hope carrier, because it's not segmented into portions of my life, it's all of my life.

In fact, I love that Jesus says, "My Father is the Gardener." The Father is the Gardener and He is tending the garden of our hearts. As He tends the garden of our hearts, we are empowered to guard the spaces and the places we go every single day to bring them into the fullness of potential. I love this last verse, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." In other words, God has called you to do good work, and it's not just your job. It's every garden you've been placed over, through words and actions, to bring it into the submission of the kingdom of God that you might rule and reign with Him.

That the fullness of His life may flow into that space. This is what it means to be a hope carrier in Jesus' name. Holy Spirit, would You just open our eyes, open our ears, and soften our hearts

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that we might see, hear and believe that we are part of the very mission of God, and You have given us a garden to tend. May we do it with all of our heart. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.