

Alright everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. I am so glad you are here with us, wherever you are. Last week, we kicked off a brand new series called The Hope Carrier Initiative. It's not really a series, it's more like a season and a way of life. It's been a long time coming. We've been praying, we've been preparing, we've been waiting on God, and now is the time. Now is the time for us to step into this new space, because God is doing a new thing in a new way. What we're doing is we're just talking about, what does it look like to live on mission with God? What does it look like to live in the midst of the kingdom of God, in the midst of our daily lives? What does it look like to bring hope to the world, to change my world? What does it look like to align myself with what God is doing? We believe that God is doing a new thing and He's doing it in a new way.

If you're here, I don't believe you're here by chance or coincidence. Whether you're brand new or you've been with us a long time, I believe that you are here for such a time as this, that God has brought you to this place because you were created to dream with God, to have a vision from God, to create and design and make things beautiful. That you were created to live in the midst of heavenly realities, in the midst of the earthly circumstances around you. What I'm hoping and praying in this series is that everything we're talking about becomes a part of the very ethos of who we are. That it gets ingrained in our DNA. That it becomes part of the character and the foundation and the identity of who we are as a people. All we're really doing is just trying to act like God is real. I know you keep hearing me say that, and it's funny, because that almost feels like that's the prophetic statement of the season. We're just acting like God is real, like He's speaking and is moving, like His kingdom has come and more of it is coming.

And what I love about our church is that we have no interest in just learning about God, we want to experience God. We don't want to just know about God, we want to encounter God. We don't want to just hear about God, we want to hear from God. We don't want to just hear what God says, we want to do what God says. We don't want to just go to church, we want to be the people of God. So, I just want to start where we left off last time, and we just said, "Arise, shine," like awake, open your eyes. You were created for so much more than to just be bored and to just go through the motions of life. "For your light has come," you literally radiate with hope, you have a treasure chest of hope inside you. You glow with the very glory of God, springs of living water are within you, because "the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth," in all the areas of life that you go every single day, "and thick darkness is over the people."

They're lost, lonely, and broken, "but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you. Nations," the areas of life, "will come to your light. And kings," the influencers of the day, "to the brightness of your dawn." You were created for so much more than to just go through the motions and be religious. You're created to be a hope carrier. Not a "hype carrier," full of emotions and feelings and a do-gooder humanitarian. No, a hope carrier with a confident expectation of the goodness of God, believing that the kingdom of God is better than the

world around you, and that it is fully available in the here and now. A hope carrier is simply a disciple of Jesus living on mission to change their world. A disciple, a learner, a student, a follower - one who becomes like the one they follow, of Jesus. It's like a hope carrier is someone whose life has been interrupted by Jesus and they have now taken their kingdom and submitted and surrendered it to His.

They're in this process of learning to become like Jesus and do the things that Jesus did, to talk like, act like, live like, believe like, speak like Jesus. Living on mission to change their world. Not "the" world, because that's so big it feels overwhelming; but "my" world, right here, where I am, right now. But before I can change my world, He has to first become Lord of my world, because I can only release the kingdom to the level I am submitted and surrendered to. The kingdom of God is a movement of hope. The kingdom of God is bigger than the church. The church is a part of the kingdom, we have to understand this, but the kingdom is bigger than the church because God wants His kingdom in all the areas of life - family, education, healthcare, business, government, arts and media, sports, and technology. The places you and I go every single day. You see, the kingdom of God is simply the rule and reign of God.

It's where things are submitted and surrendered to the lordship of Jesus. It's the range of His effective will, where the things that He wants done are happening. It's what God is doing, and the church is the people of God, united by the Spirit of God, under the lordship of Jesus, sent to change the world. The church is the extension of the people of the kingdom, and it's not that the church has a mission, it's that the mission has a church, a people that He wants to send into all the areas of life. It's why Jesus, when He teaches us to pray, says, "Father your kingdom come, your will be done on earth," not church, earth; all of the areas of life, "as it is in heaven." Because Jesus came to destroy the works of darkness everywhere. He says that, "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you." In other words, you've been sent on mission to do the same things that Jesus did, the same way Jesus did them, in the same place as Jesus did them. Where did Jesus do his work?

All the areas of life - in the temple, in homes, the synagogues, the education centers of the day. He went to where sick people were. He did it in the marketplace. Through the government, both the Roman and Jewish governments. He was the greatest storyteller of the day, media. He played with children. He did his ministry on the Roman Road, the greatest technological advance of the day. Like, all the areas of life, and that's where He sends you. I know some of you, you were here last week, and this is a recap; but you've got to hear it again. I mean, Jesus says, "All authority on heaven and earth has been given unto Me, therefore go make disciples of all nations." If Jesus has all authority, then the rulers of the areas of life have none. We've been empowered to go and take them down, because when He says, "Make disciples of all nations," the word "nations" is the word "ethnos." It means "people groups." When we think, "disciple nations," we think, go on a mission trip to a third-world nation. While that's important, it's more than that.

People don't just group together by the country they live in, they group by the areas of life that they're in. I would just submit to you that Apple and Google probably have more influence in this world than Jamaica. McDonald's probably has more influence in this world than Azerbaijan. Hollywood or the NBA or the NFL, like, we have to think differently about what discipling nations looks like. It means going into the areas of life that we go every single day, on mission with God to release His kingdom. This is why Jesus says you're like salt, light, and leaven. Salt - meant to bring taste to a flavorless world. Light - meant to shine in pitch black darkness. Leaven - meant to be sprinkled into the world to make the whole thing rise like yeast. This is why Jesus says the kingdom of Heaven is within you. If the kingdom of Heaven is within you, then wherever you go, the kingdom of God just showed up.

Contained in the kingdom of God are all the answers to all the world's problems. Every problem the world has, from poverty to disease, to despair, to brokenness, to divorce, all of the answers to all of those problems is in the kingdom of Heaven. If the kingdom of Heaven is in you, then when you show up to the places you go every single day, hope just walked in the door with you. Divine solutions, heavenly wisdom, and supernatural power just showed up, because you walked in the door. See, hope is the influencing agent. Hope leads. Whoever has the most hope in any situation, they are the de facto leader of that space; not the person with the education, not the person with the authority, not the person with the title. The person with the most hope is the greatest influencer, because what the human soul wants more than anything else is hope.

Think about the people we have in our church and where they go every single day - moms, dads, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, grandmas, grandpas, teachers, and students, and administrators and counselors, and doctors and nurses, and technicians and therapists, and CEOs and vice presidents, and managers and consultants, and contractors, and plumbers and construction workers, town councilmen, and Mayors, and First Responders and police officers and firefighters, musicians and influencers, and storytellers and designers, professional athletes, student athletes, coaches and trainers, IT people, data people, infrastructure people. This is who is in our church. This is you. You're not just supposed to be here. You're supposed to be this and go to all these places. So the question is, is where do you go? Where do you go? Because you have to stop separating sacred and secular. This is all sacred because wherever you go, there the kingdom is, therefore it is sacred.

Just think about this. When you go to family, you're showing family the love and care of God. You go into education, you're showing the very wisdom and understanding of God. You go to healthcare, you're showing the healing and the mercy of God. You go into business, you're showing God's favor, God's ways, God's wisdom. You go to government, you're showing the world the very protection and freedom and justice of God. You're showing the world in arts and media, the beauty, the holiness, the creativity of God. In sports, the play and joy of God. In technology, the very ingenuity of God. In church, the very grace and truth of God. It is so much more than what you and I think of. Are you with me on this? Okay, so 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. Okay. 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. Are you with me on this? I think I lost most of you there. Work is very good. We have to ask ourselves, what did Adam do in the Garden?

Well, we know that he did two things - he named the animals and he tended the Garden. He ruled his kingdom through his words and through his actions. That's how kings rule - through their words and through their actions. He named the animals, gave them an identity and a purpose and a destiny and their nature. Then, he tended the Garden with his actions and brought it to the fullness of its potential. Kings have a will and the way they rule their kingdom, the way they release their will, is through their words and their actions. So, Adam ruled the Garden through words and actions because that's how God, the King, rules, through words and actions. God said, "Let there be," and it was so. He says, "Every word I speak will not return void, but will accomplish the purpose for which I sent it." Words. And then God rules through actions. Jesus took on humanity, moved into our neighborhood with grace and truth, and became a humble, obedient, even to death on a cross. Words and actions. Okay.

You have a kingdom. You have a place of authority and influence that God has entrusted to you and you rule it through words and actions. The question is, is what kind of words and actions are you using? Words and actions that align with God's kingdom and release it through you, or words and actions that align with the world and bring the world's kingdom into that space? This is why it says, "Whatever you do," whatever kind of work you do, whatever place you are, "whether in word or deed," words or actions, "do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." You have been empowered by God to rule your kingdom, your place, through words and actions. That's why Jesus says, "The tongue has the power of life and death." "You speak to this mountain, say, 'Throw yourself in the sea.' It will be done for you." It's why Jesus says, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?" "Don't be just hearers of the Word, be doers of the word." You rule your kingdom through words and actions.

This is what it looks like to be a hope carrier. Through word and deed - to align our words and our actions with the King, so His kingdom flows through us. The reason it's in the name of the Lord Jesus is because what we are basically saying is, based on His power and His authority, as His represented delegated authority on this earth. Through this word or this action, I release His kingdom into this space. Are you with me on that? This is why everything Jesus did He walked around and He demonstrated and declared the kingdom. He preached the kingdom and then healed the sick, to show the world, "This is what My kingdom looks like, and this is how I reign over it." In the name of the Lord Jesus. 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 for the good of others and the glory of God is good 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. Oh, I don't know on time today. We're going to be in trouble.

You've got to look at it through creation, not the curse - which is called Garden Theology. This is a little bonus and I've got to work this in, because I don't normally get time to do this. 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. You with me on this? Okay, that was, pause, we're back in the game. 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. He never gave up. He never gave up on the purpose of humanity. At every major juncture in the Bible, God redeclares why you're here. After the flood of Noah, "So He blessed Noah and said to his sons, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth.'" You're a hope carrier, go take my kingdom, let's try this again.

Abraham, when He makes the Covenant with Abraham, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you... and you will be a blessing... all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you." "Everywhere you go, people should be blessed because I am with you and My kingdom is flowing through you." Or how about the Israelites, when they take the Promised Land, "Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land." In other words, "Go in and demonstrate and declare my kingdom like Eden. Let's start there, bring it to the ends of the earth." How about when they're in the exile, "Seek the peace and the prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." In other words God says, "Even in exile, you're a hope carrier. My kingdom is supposed to flow through you." So, you feel like you're in exile today, in your job, in your marriage, in your neighborhood? Guess what, you've got an assignment to work with God, to bring the peace and prosperity to that area where you are. Or how about the resurrected Jesus, "Go and make disciples of all nations."

"Teach them to think differently and live differently." Or how about when the Holy Spirit was poured out, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the Earth." "You'll be my representatives once again." It's like, at every major juncture, God stops, and says, "Hey, you want to try this again?" This is what I believe is happening in this series. It's like God is stopping, and saying, "Hey, want to try this again? Want to try this again? You don't have to live in a corporate career for 40 years and then get to 65 so you can retire. You're 20, you don't have to just live on social media and just try to do as little as you can to get as much as you can. You're married and you feel like you're lost in this pointless routine. You don't have to be lost in that, we could try it again. You want to try it again? Because you're a hope carrier and you're made to work with Me, and I'll give you the power and the authority and the grace to do it."

It's like, at every turn, at every turn. Luke 9 and 10, Jesus sends out the 12 disciples to go and declare and demonstrate the kingdom through word and deed, and it's a disaster. They can't cast out a baby demon. They argue who's going to be the greatest, and then they want to call fire down from heaven to smoke a city. I would have shut the whole thing down. In Luke 10, the very next chapter, Jesus doubles down and sends out 72 of them. The 12 fail, and He's like, "I

know, let's send out 72 and try it again." It's like, He keeps trying and He keeps trying and He keeps trying. 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. Are you with me on this? Can you give me two more minutes to try to, at least, put a bow on this for a second? This didn't go the way I wanted to today, but I'm going to try to redeem this back part here. 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. You have been given a garden and you're supposed to work with God, to steward and cultivate and create and bring that thing into the Garden City, the fullness of the kingdom of God. Ruling and reigning with Him, using your gifts and your talents, and your purpose and your passion to do good work. This is what a hope carrier does. A hope carrier doesn't just say, "You should believe in Jesus."

They go and do things with excellence and integrity and character and they believe they've been given authority through their words and their actions to bring the kingdom of God into the space. They take a garden and they cultivate it so it can become the Garden City. That's the heartbeat of a hope carrier. So, you just close your eyes with me. I know there was a lot today and there's a lot of foundation theology. I probably didn't do a good job of explaining it to you, so I'm just trusting that the Holy Spirit is working in it. So, what is God just stirring in your heart? What's maybe just a little bit of a challenge, an inspiration, an invitation? You were created for so much more than to just try to get out of the calling of your life.

My hope is that whether you're a student in the middle of your life or later in your life, that somehow, some way, you realize that you have been empowered to work with God to bring His kingdom through words and actions into every place and every space you go. So, Jesus would you redeem the theology of work in our mind and open up our hearts, subdue our hearts, Lord, where they need to be that we might once again partner with what You're doing in the here and the now. We aren't in the places, the gardens that you've given to us by accidents, by coincidence, or by happenstance. We're there because you want to see Your kingdom come and Your will be done in our space as it is in heaven. May we live and take a next step as a hope carrier. In Jesus' name we pray.