

All right. All right, let's take a moment, before we get started, and welcome in everybody at all of our campuses. Welcome to Valley Creek today. Today, we got to gather as the church. Today, we're honoring the Word of God as a church.

Today, we're experiencing the Spirit of God as a church, and we're learning so much more of what it is to actually be the church. You see, we're learning. You don't just go to church, you are the church. We're learning, you don't just hear a message, you actually respond to it by faith. We're learning that right now. On the weekends, we're not just coming to a service, we're having an experience, an encounter. We're experiencing the goodness of God and His Holy Spirit, and what it is that gathers the people of God, so welcome to church. Welcome to Valley Creek, and I'm so excited about what God has been doing in the season. We've been in an amazing season. We've been learning so much more in this time. We've been in a season - we've been learning about Kingdom Culture 101: Learning to Live a Life of Values. Let me just start by saying, I didn't see it coming. At the beginning of the series, I thought, this is going to be good. We're going to remind ourselves of what the values are here. Those of us that have been around a while can remember them, we can take note of them.

Those that are newer with us are going to be like, "Hey, nice values," and then we're going to slide into the holidays. But it's been big, and it's been heart work. It's been churning, and stirring, and moving inside of us and God's been on the move. I just didn't see it coming. But I'm so thankful for what God has spoken. You see, the kingdom is a treasure to be valued. The kingdom is worth engaging and little by little, our hearts are changing. Look what it says, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, hidden in a field which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has, and he buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and he bought it." The kingdom of Heaven, and its values, and its culture - it's a treasure. It's worth so much.

Values are valuable, and learning to live a life of values, when we do this wholehearted man, it's a treasure from the Lord. I'm thankful for what He's speaking to us right now. This week, we want to step into that next valuable value, and it is simply this: We live with a spirit of gratitude. Gratitude is the normal response to receiving God's grace. Right off the bat, can I ask you, how's your gratitude? Do you live with a spirit of gratitude? Do you say thank you often? Do you find yourself talking more about what is good and God's goodness, and how things are working out, more than what is, what can't, what won't, what hasn't? Another way to say this is, are you a grumbler or are you a gratefuller? Because, just like we've been saying all series long, you can't actually answer that question for yourself. It's the people in your life closest to you that can actually speak to and say if you live with a spirit of gratitude or not.

You see, your spirit of gratitude is so heavily connected to the grace of God. The grace of God pouring all over our life, the grace of God His goodness to us. Paul says it like this, "We praise God for the glorious grace He's poured out on us. Those have belonged to His dear son, He's

so rich in kindness. His Grace has been purchased. He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son. He forgave our sins. He showered His kindness on us along with all wisdom and understanding." Paul just says, yeah, the grace of God. It's amazing. I have so much gratitude, because of it. Grace - Grace is so much more than just the forgiveness of sins. Grace is truly all of God's undeserved favor and supernatural power that transforms every area of our life. It is glorious grace.

When you grab hold of the grace of God, when you take stock of it, gratitude is that normal response that flows out of our life. I think for a lot of us, because we don't have and haven't fully understood the grace of God, we haven't lived with the spirit of gratitude for God. Look what it says right here; it says, "See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God, and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." What it says here is, there's a way that you can miss the grace of God. Do you think the world right now sees bitter trouble? Do you think the world is living with entitlement that's breaking down families and defiling hearts and minds and homes? Well, that happens when we fall short of the grace of God. What happens is a bitter root starts to grow up inside of us. As I was preparing for today, I felt like God really clearly spoke this: Gratitude is a garden; bitterness is a weed. Gratitude is a garden, but bitterness is a weed. It takes nothing for a weed to spring up.

Think of the springtime. When you're looking at your lawn, you start to get like the dandelions popping up. That's because you didn't put any pre-emergent down. That was easy. They just spring up out of nowhere in your garden. When weeds are growing, when they're choking out your roses, or when you're just sitting there pulling them all summer long. That's easy, they just spring up, they just sort of happen. But gratitude is a garden, and you have to cultivate that garden, you have to actually help it grow. You work with God, the constant gardener, to grow the garden of gratitude in your heart. We actually see in Paul's case, on the verse I just read, I want you to look at this again, and see how he cultivates the garden of gratitude in his heart. "We praise God for the glorious grace He's poured out on us who belong to His dear son. He's so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son, He forgave our sins, He showered us with His kindness, along with all wisdom and understanding."

Do you see what he's doing? He's mentioning the specific things that he's thankful for, in order, and he's speaking those over his life, and he's growing a garden of gratitude. Do you see it? "He's rich in kindness, He purchased our freedom, He forgave our sins, He's given us all wisdom and understanding." He's speaking out specific things. Paul recognized grace. In doing so, the spirit of gratitude was growing in his heart. It was truly a garden, it wasn't just a weed, springing up to cause trouble and break down his life. How do we do that? How do we be very specific on the things we're thankful for? But let me just give you a few practical things before we get started here. Actually, let me go to this first. I want you to know that Jesus, He Himself, Jesus, cultivated the same garden in His heart, and He spoke specifics into His life and the lives of those around Him. Check this out. "Jesus looked to heaven, and said, 'Father, thank you for hearing me.'"

Very specific. He heard him. "Then Jesus took the seven loaves and the fish. He thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces." Specific. Thank you, God, for... "At that time, Jesus prayed this prayer, 'Oh, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike.'" Jesus Himself cultivated a garden of gratitude in His heart. Because gratitude was a value in His heart that it spilled out into every area of His life. The gratitude inside of Jesus' own heart started to impact and affect all the atmosphere around Him. Specific gratitude - here's how you start to experience specific gratitude in your life. The first is, you've got to stop and reflect. Man, it's impossible to be grateful when you're going 100 miles an hour, it just is. We have to slow down to take stock of who God is and what He's done, His goodness in our life.

The next one is just to make a list. This is a great way to cultivate that garden of gratitude. To make a list - to literally write it down. I want to encourage you - consider making a list with subheadings - like family, and then writing 1, 2, 3 things I'm thankful for about my family; or health, 1, 2, 3 things and writing those down and taking stock of them. Truly gardening, cultivating that garden in your heart. You can also take a look at [Valleycreek.plus](http://Valleycreek.plus). There is a great Gratitude Experience. I want to encourage you to look at that one. That helps you list things out, to cultivate it, to look at all the things that are good about your life and what you have to be thankful for. The next one is just to say it out loud. I think, for some of us, we miss the power of speaking gratitude over my life like, "Thank you, God, that I'm breathing." "Thank you, God, that I'm here today." "Thank you, God, for Your goodness in my life." You see, gratitude is the language of the kingdom.

When we speak gratitude, we're speaking the very language of the kingdom. Sometimes speaking it out over our life, saying it so my ears can hear it, so my mind can perceive it, so my heart can receive it is the way forward. You say it out so your ears hear it, your mind perceives it, and your heart begins to receive it. Sometimes you've just got to say it out loud - when you're driving in your car, when you're walking in the door, when you wake up in the morning, "Thank You, God, for..." The next one is to say it to others. That language of the kingdom, that gratitude, just speaking it out over other people's life. Can I ask you this question? When was the last time you just looked at somebody, just like, looked them in the eye, and just said, "Thank you." "Thank you for..." being specific, saying it, and helping to cultivate a garden of gratitude in their heart. You know how bad people need that right now? Like, so bad. I would encourage you, next time you're in a restaurant, to that server, "Hey, thank you so much for serving us, for just being here, and just serving us wholeheartedly. We know that there's just a lot going on. We really appreciate your great service."

To that teacher, "Thank you so much for teaching my kids. Thank you so much for pouring into them. You've given so much to them. We know that you care about them so much." To leaders, "Thank you so much for leading. Leading is difficult. We know it takes a lot." "Thank you for..." and then speaking it out loud. I think we have a great opportunity to use more of the language

of the kingdom to impact and actually see the kingdom all around us, to pour it into people's life. I'm telling you, if you go up to somebody, and you just have a "Thank you for..." people are so desperate for that right now, they won't know what to do with it. They will eat that up. They're just going to eat it up all day, and so, go, say it out loud. Use the language of the kingdom. We know this is important. Because, as parents, that's one of the very first things you teach your toddlers, your littles to say is, "Thank you."

Think about the exchange that you have with a toddler on like, you'll hand them something, they say "Thank you." They'll hand you something, "Thank you." You'll hand them something, "Say 'thank you.'" Eventually, they're learning, it's like "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you." Then, have you ever noticed, eventually, you're just, you're just, taking whatever crazy stuff they hand you. I get like -- I can remember this with my own daughters. They hand you like a dismembered Barbie leg, "Thank you." A half-chewed chicken nugget, "Oh, thank you." An old sock from the floor, "Oh, thank you." And you imagine, as adults, if we just kept doing that with one another. Like you always had to say thank you, no matter what gets handed to you - like old gum, "Thank you." You're going to put it in their hands. We know that cultivating this language of gratitude is so important for our littles, but it's like it fades out of our minds and our hearts when we get older. It's like we forget about the importance of just a simple thank you, and what that can do in someone's day.

Can I just encourage you, speak it out, often, the language of the kingdom. Like, "God, we're just so thankful for You. I'm just so thankful for You - for my life. For my breath. For my ability to do things like walk, and drive a car. For my family, that's like way more than I deserve. For my wife who's beyond amazing. For my daughters that are growing up to know You, and believing that they are Your beloved daughters, and I see that in them, and it's changing them. For our church family. This has just given me so much in my life. It's helped raise me and shown me the way of the kingdom.

This is a place that I can come to, that's truly a harbor of hope from my own heart every single week. Thank You, Jesus, for Your grace; it is changing us. It's changing me. Thank you, God, for You. Just thank You." To speak gratitude is a normal part of our daily routine and our life over and over and over, just having a heart full of gratitude. Man, I just want to even do that more often. Moments like that, times like that, speaking out the language of the kingdom over my life and the lives of others. You have to be clear that it's not even just a one-time thing. It's not just a, say-thank-you-sometimes thing, or to thank-God-for-who-He-is kind of thing. It's an all-the-time thing.

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." If you're looking for some verses to memorize, here's some good ones. Verse 16: "Rejoice always;" Verse 17: "Pray continually." Those are easy ones to memorize. Verse 18, is going to blow your mind, "Give thanks in all circumstances," all of them, all of them. When I'm sick, when it's not working out the way I thought it was going to, when I have that relational

tension, all of them; "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Now, I want you to think about this for a second. People will come to me all the time. They'll say things like, "Jason, what's God's will for my life? Who am I going to marry? What should my job be? Where should we live?" They'll look for that insight, and those aren't bad questions. But what you have to catch is that those are God's specific will for our life. God chooses the times and places where people should live. His set-in-advance things for us, that He's purposed for us to do.

But God's general will for our life comes first. God's general will for our life sits as like, the foundation for us to experience God's specific will for our life. What's God's general will for our life? To give thanks in all circumstances. Really, think with me for a second. Could it just be that some of us have not fully experienced God's future because we haven't lived the present with gratitude? Could it be that God's will for you tomorrow, His specific will for you tomorrow, is actually waiting for you to experience God's will for you today, a spirit of gratitude? That gratitude could be the key that actually unlocks your future?

I think so many of us spend a lot of our life rejecting God's will for right now, actually not living with the spirit of gratitude, and then we'll get frustrated when we feel like God hasn't revealed tomorrow. But, God is so good to us that He doesn't actually want to give us more of the things that harm us and make us bitter, and create a spirit of entitlement, and give us more of a poverty mindset. I mean, honestly, just think about it for a second. Why would God want to give you more stuff to worry about, another job or a different job to complain about, more money to grumble about, so that you could miss more of the will that He has for your life? He's so good. He doesn't actually want to do that to you. Gratitude, I would contend, is a key that can unlock our future. You have to understand, gratitude is actually an act of your will.

Here's a question for you. What comes first, the chicken or the egg? It's the classic question. The answer is a chicken because God created it in the garden, and then it laid an egg. But, more than that, here's a question for you. What comes first, that you feel grateful, or that you give thanks? That you feel grateful or that you give thanks? Because notice that it doesn't say, "Feel thanks in all circumstances." It says, "Give thanks." If we wait until we feel grateful to give thanks, you're going to miss about 100,000 other things to be thankful for. This Thanksgiving, can I just encourage you, when you're sitting around the table, with your family, be the one that just says, "Hey, what if we just stopped, and we all just said one thing we're thankful for?" What if we just stopped right now? Everybody just stop and just say, "What's one thing we can be thankful for?" Because as we speak it out, as we give thanks, you're going to feel even more grateful. You'll be able to cascade and live in a spirit of gratitude in your home.

In your home, at your in-laws, at the Chinese restaurant, give thanks. Give thanks; you're thinking it right now, because turkeys are really expensive. You're thinking about going to Chinese. "Give thanks, in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Check this out, many of us give thanks when we get what we want, but we fail to give the same amount of thanks when we get what we actually need. Many of us give thanks when we get

what we want - that relationship, that job, that money, that stuff, that healing; but we fail to give the same thanks, the same gratitude, when we get what we actually need - that blind spot revealed. That conviction of sin. That godly relationship pulling rocks out of my heart. The whisper of the Holy Spirit saying, "Hey, don't go there." "Don't look at that." "Don't do that."

Here's one for you. Many of us fail to give thanks for that closed door. But can I just tell you, that closed door is most often God's goodness in your life, and something you can really be thankful for - giving God thanks for what we actually need. What if we made the choice to be grateful before, during, and after? Before I know if I even get the job, during that really difficult semester at school, after I actually got healed like, way after, way after I get healed and remember God's goodness. Before, during, and after; in all circumstances, for this is God's will for my life. Another way to say it is, what if your gratitude wasn't only based on an outcome out here, but in what God wanted to actually do in here? You see, when we truly live with the spirit of gratitude, we go in knowing the gratefulness has nothing to do with things working out for me, and everything to do with God working in me.

A true spirit of gratitude has things working in me, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose." "Works in you to will," God's will for your life, a spirit of gratitude, it's God working in you. This is one of the problems with the world when it comes to the world with entitlement. Right now, we're not realizing that a true spirit of gratitude is based on what God's already done, not just expectations of what I expect Him to do. Entitlement is an oxymoron in the life of a Christian, and here's why. Entitlement is based on thinking that we deserve something, or we've been shorted in some way, or we should get it better than they get it, and so we'll scream out like, "I deserve, I deserve!" "Why haven't I gotten...?" "Why hasn't this worked out this way?" But the irony of the whole thing is, you don't actually want what you actually deserve. You don't want what you actually deserve.

"Although they knew God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do the very things, they also approve of those that practice them." Can I just tell you, thank You, Jesus, that in Jesus, we don't actually get what we deserve. A spirit of entitlement has it backwards - it screams "Justice," and "I deserve," and "I want," but in reality, you don't actually want it. You didn't actually get it. You've gotten so much more in Jesus. Judgment is when you get what you deserve. Mercy is when you don't get what you deserve. Grace is when you get what you didn't deserve. Then grace, Jesus' grace in our life is so much more. We essentially got everything that He deserved, and He got everything we deserved, so we can live the spirit of gratitude.

We got to thinking about this particular value for us as a church. Where did it come from? What was it born out of? It was born out of grace. We were so taken over by God's grace in our life, and so when we started to talk about it and realize more about it, and churn it in our souls, we realized that the only normal response, the only natural response is truly the spirit of gratitude. That's how we got here to understand this kingdom value. That's where it came from. That's

why it's in our hearts. You see, the essence of living with the spirit of gratitude is to know that you live in abundance. You live with so much more than you actually deserve. You really have it all in Jesus. In Jesus, you can live with an abundance versus a poverty mindset. Abundance sounds like this, "Every good and perfect gift has come down from my Father in heaven. He's blessing me with every blessing in the heavenly realms. He takes care of flowers and birds, and He clothed them in splendor. My God is going to take care of me far more than I actually need."

Poverty says the opposite. A poverty mindset says, "There's always not enough. I haven't gotten what I wanted or what I thought was going to happen. I'm disappointed with the turnout of it. I'm lacking in..." Can I just tell you, you don't lack anything. You have everything in Jesus' name. You don't lack anything, you have everything you need in Jesus. Look at this. "Praise the Lord, my soul, forget not all His benefits - who forgives all your sins," already have it in Jesus. "He heals all your diseases." You already have it in Jesus. "Who redeems your life from the pit." You already have it in Jesus. "Who crowns you with love and compassion." You already have it in Jesus. "Who satisfies your desires with good things." You already have it in Jesus. "So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. You already have it in Jesus' name.

You don't lack anything. You have everything you need in Jesus, and you have His grace, His undeserved favor, His supernatural empowerment that transforms your life flowing over every part of you. Do you remember the story of the 10 lepers, the 10 men who had leprosy? In that story, there's 10 men that have such a brutal skin disease that they are ostracized from society. Imagine having a disease that would take away your feeling in your fingers and your toes. That would cause parts of your body to start to deteriorate because you had no blood flow. You'd then hurt yourself because you couldn't feel when you were going to trip or stumble. You'd have pieces and parts that literally had open wounds and scars and damage. These 10 men, one day see Jesus walking past them on the road. They cry out and they say, "Master, have pity on us." He looks at them, says, "I will. Go and show yourself to the priest." They go on their way. As they go, something miraculous happens.

It says, as they went, they were healed. I can almost imagine what they must have said to one another as that was happening. Can you imagine, as they're walking, and they see their skin starting to get blood flow again, and they see their wounds starting to be healed, and they start to feel their fingers and their toes for the first time in years? I bet you, they were filled with gratitude in that moment. There was only one problem. They were filled with gratitude when they got what they wanted. But they forgot to come back to praise God for what they needed. Here's what happens. Nine of them just head off and do their own thing, only one comes back to Jesus. It says, in a loud voice, he praised God. He fell down on the ground, and he began to worship Him. Jesus looks at him, He's like, "Hey, weren't there nine guys that were also with you? Where are they?" He's like, "No, I think, I'm the only one here, sir."

He has him stand up. He looks him right in the eye, and He says, "Okay, go, your faith has made you well." In that moment, the man got what he actually needed - a healing of body, mind, heart, and soul. He had expressed gratitude and gratitude had released this flow into his life, this move of God that began to transform him. Everything started to change for him. Right in that moment, he was fully healed. I think we can learn a little bit about that story. The first thing is, gratitude is just humility expressed. That man came back with gratitude and he was humble. He actually fell down at Jesus' feet. Gratitude says, "Hey, I didn't get myself here. I didn't put my whole life together. This isn't on me. There's more than just what I've done."

Gratitude is just humbly expressing that humility, that gratitude, that thank you back. Gratitude honors God. It honors God for His role in our life, for who He is, for what He's done. It's just an honor to Him to say, "Thank you, God, for my whole life, for it all, for everything." Gratitude truly heals our hearts. That man in that moment - his body had been healed, but really, his heart had been healed because he came back and he expressed gratitude. That is, when he got what he wanted, he still thanked God for what he really needed, and he received it in that moment. I got to thinking about that story. What if that story is actually a picture of what happens in the church? That is that there's only about one in 10 of us, about 10%, that truly live our life with such a spirit of gratitude that we live in the full healing of God each and every day. There's a healing that he wants to do inside of each one of us that I think can only be experienced when we come back and express the spirit of gratitude.

Now, that story parallels another story in the New Testament called the Road to Emmaus, and it's fascinating. It's actually a parallel story in a lot of ways, because in the story of the Road to Emmaus, men are also walking along the road, and they also have an encounter with Jesus. But in this case, these men have a different kind of situation going on. They have a brokenness in their hearts, they have a bitterness and entitlement. Nothing about their life had worked out like they thought it was going to. Everything is kind of falling apart around them. In fact, they're so embittered that like, the first thing they say to Jesus is actually kind of like a jerk thing to say. They, basically, look at him, and they're like, "Hey, man, you've been living under a rock? Are you the only one in Jerusalem that doesn't know what's been going on these days?" Jesus keeps walking with them, and He has this entire conversation with them. Then, He, ends up making it all the way back to their home, all the way back to their house.

Something miraculous happens when he sits down with them at the table. "When he was at the table with them, he took bread, he gave thanks, broke it, and began to give it to them." What did he give to them? He gave to them the bread on the table. What else did he give to them? He gave him the gratitude that was in his heart. The garden of gratitude in Jesus' own heart. In that moment, it literally goes from in here and it flows out into the room and into the atmosphere. He broke the bread, He gave thanks, and began to give both of those things to them. "Then, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him." Hear me.



There is a revelation of Jesus that's so deep, it's so profound, it's so good, that it can only be recognized when we live with the spirit of gratitude. There's a depth of the kingdom that can only be experienced for those of us that are willing to live fully with a thankful heart, giving thanks in every circumstance, living out God's will for our life, cultivating a garden of gratitude inside of us. The God of this age has blinded the eyes, the minds of the world, so that they only can live in bitterness, and entitlement, and a poverty mindset, and grumbling, and not so with us. Not so with us. May we truly live with a spirit of gratitude for who Jesus is and what He's done, and every good and perfect gift that comes down from Him, all His goodness pouring over our life. A spirit of gratitude truly unlocks. It releases a completely next-level revelation about God and His kingdom, and the goodness of our Father and the love of Jesus, and the Spirit's move in our life.

Church, may we all live with the spirit of gratitude. You see, when the spirit of gratitude truly becomes a value in your heart, then the language of the kingdom and the culture of the kingdom will overflow into every part of our lives. Would you pray with me? Jesus, even today, we just choose, first of all, to say thank You. Thank You, God, for Your grace pouring all over our life. That undeserved favor, and supernatural empowerment that changes us. Thank You. Thank You for the life that we've been entrusted to. Thank You for the church that we're in.

Thank You for the spirit of gratitude that really is growing inside of us. I declare by faith that it won't just be one in 10, it'll be 10 and 10. It won't just be a few. It'll be all of us. It won't just be that some of us are here and we miss Your will for our life, but we will live fully in Your will over our life that we live with the spirit of gratitude. Today, we just choose to rejoice, always to pray continually and to give thanks in every single thing. Can I just pray this over you? If you're here right now, and your season has been such that it's so difficult to find that spark of gratitude, right now, inside of your heart. Lord, I just declare over them that they would receive Your Grace at a completely different level.

Jesus loves you. He gave himself up for you. He's with you. His many blessings are pouring all over your life. If you feel it, if you feel like that grumbleness, that weed of bitterness popping up, may you truly receive the grace of Jesus. Do not fall short of His grace. Jesus, thank You for what You're doing, for these values in our life and in our church. They are so valuable, and we're so thankful for them. We love You. In Jesus name, amen.